

# Parents from God (Volume 4)

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## The First Lessons of Love

The very first person whom life brought me together with is my mom. I knew her even before my birth. Her voice, manner of speaking, her mood — all of this was familiar to me from the very moment when my mind began to form, and when my hearing began to distinguish sounds. I grew in a small dark world, knowing no worries, and my mom sometimes spoke with me, tenderly stroking me through the walls of her belly. This affectionate attitude was imprinted in my consciousness, and I liked it very much. It created the impression that through mom's lips the Creator Himself was conversing with me. I don't know Him personally, but I think He is very much like my mom.

Very often I heard my father's voice. Sometimes he spoke tenderly with me, and I would joyfully kick with my little legs against the walls of my cozy world. But sometimes dad was very rough and spoke sharply about something with mom, and she would cry afterward. When mom's voice changed, and she tried to tell dad something while shouting, I would freeze from fear and anxiously wait to see how it would end. Mom's mood was transmitted to me, and I tried to understand what kind of place I had ended up in. What strange world was surrounding me? Why couldn't my closest and dearest people communicate tenderly, but instead created unnecessary noise, from which they themselves would later suffer?

But when mom began to speak with me, her voice would always calm down, and she would gradually switch to a tender tone, and her hands would stroke my little world, transmitting to me all the beauty of her affectionate touches. I understood that not everything was so scary, and any conflict would still lead everyone to peace. Then why conflict at all?

But one day something very unpleasant happened. My world began to squeeze me and, accompanied by mom's moans and cries, pushed my body out into the unknown. Bright light blinded me, someone's hands pulled me further toward the unknown, cold room air pierced my body. The water world in which I was accustomed to enjoying life and living left me

forever, and my chest compressed from such stress, letting air in from outside. How much I disliked all of this!!! And I decided to express my protest to the entire environment with the only cry I was capable of, which caused universal joy. Some lady cut my only source of nutrition, clamping it with a clip, and carried me to bathe. The warm water reminded me of my small cozy world, and I decided that I would continue to live this way, but they pulled me out again into the cold air and, wrapping me in some cloth, carried me to mom.

Mom's hands tenderly pressed me to her chest, and her familiar voice calmed me. And I decided that if mom was nearby, then not everything was so bad. My lips were brought to mom's chest, and I immediately understood what I needed to do with this. I saw that I needed to suck this, and I began to apply all my strength to squeeze something out of mom. It was so interesting to extract food for myself amid general joy. Although I received almost nothing, I really liked eating mom, and I decided to continue this activity later.

My eyes were tired from all the events, and I wanted to rest a little. How pleasant it was to disconnect from this strange world in mom's cozy arms.

They put me in a stroller and took me to a dark room, giving mom a chance to rest from all the events that had occurred. How pleasant my first earthly sleep was! My little nose inhaled strange air that contained all kinds of smells. My little ears heard everything that was happening around, while I slept sweetly, gathering strength for life in this world.

I was awakened by mom's tender touches. I opened one eye and began to examine my mommy. How beautiful she is! And she looked at me with fear, trying to understand whether I could see with the other eye. I decided to examine her better from another angle, which brought mom enormous joy, and she tenderly pressed me to her chest and began to tell me something. I didn't yet understand all her words, but tried to remember them and learn them by heart. Stroking me on the body and head, mom brought me to her chest and tenderly pressed my lips to her body. I remembered my first breakfast

and immediately began trying to get something for lunch too. Unfortunately, lunch was very meager, but I really liked the process itself of obtaining food this way, and I decided to repeat it later. I discovered in mom a source of life and living water, which made her very happy.

Each time this source became tastier and more abundant. And while I extracted useful resources from mom's soft depths, she tenderly stroked my hair and told me something in a quiet voice. And I, receiving pleasure from the work done, would fall asleep to the sound of her speech.

Her intonation, voice timbre, manner of speaking — all of this formed the image of love in my mind. I understood that I was born into this world to love and be loved, and decided I must definitely learn this. Soon my dad came. I recognized him by his voice. He tenderly took me in his arms, pressed me to himself and began to examine me. And I kept waiting for him to give me his chest so I could find a source of nutrition in him too. But he gave me nothing, and instead of a chest stuck a pacifier in my mouth, which created an illusion of something pleasant and useful. I looked at dad and studied his face, trying to understand how he could produce such different sounds with it.

For some reason my diapers got wet very often and mom always changed them for dry ones, sometimes wrinkling her nose from the unpleasant smell. She never scolded me when I gave her a signal that I was uncomfortable lying in wet clothes.

I remembered my first lessons of mom's love for my entire life. They were saturated with the tenderness of her hands, her quiet calm voice, careful touches and the soft timbre of her address to me. I never saw God, but they told me a lot about Him later. I think His voice is just as soft and pleasant as mom's, and He knows how to speak with me just as tenderly, and I wouldn't confuse the touch of His loving hands with anything else. He is called the Heavenly Father, but He is very similar in His tenderness to mom. I always look for this voice of love in people, but for some reason they are often very rough and don't let God manifest Himself through them.

They tell me that God doesn't exist, but I met Him in the person of my mom. No one has heard Him! But I hear His voice in the affectionate and tender manner of conversation of my parents. No one has seen Him! But I see Him in a sincere smile, in joy from my presence, in the pleasant rustle of nature and the quiet breeze of wind. God often touches me with His invisible loving hands and carries me, protecting me from the bad weather of this world.

But the older I get, the quieter this voice becomes, and then it falls completely silent. Not because God left, but because I found a replacement for Him and let into my life that which brings no peace, but stirs up my nerves.

With age I forever lost God and allowed my heart to harden, but the Lord found me and already addressed me through my mind. I recognized this voice and believed, but already with my mind, that God exists and loves me, wanting to save me. The teaching of the Bible convinced me that salvation is given only by faith in Christ. I accepted this plan. But my heart yearns for God, who is like mom.

Mom has also changed over the years, and her voice is no longer so tender, and she's not at all the same anymore. But I remember her first lessons of love and expect this from my neighbors.

Biblical verses for reflection

Jer.31:20; Is.46:3-4; 49:15-16; 66:9-14; Ps.130:1-3; 138:13-16; Mark.10:13-16; Luke.18:15-17; Lev.19:3; Ex.20:12; 1Kings.19:11-12; Prov.15:20; 19:26; 20:20; 23:22-25; 28:24; Rev.12:1-6.

## Thunder from a Clear Sky

Family life brings with it very many blessings and various trials that you cannot encounter while leading a solitary lifestyle. It reveals those underwater rocks in a person's character that might never make themselves known if there isn't someone nearby who decides to test me for strength, live behind my back and sit on my neck. Mutual love makes any family the center of the world, around which all our interests begin to revolve, and we already here, on earth, begin to learn the delights of Eternal life and understand the advantage of love over its absence.

Love is beautiful in that it is the greatest need and dream of every person, and when this dream comes into your life, regardless of your family status, you receive in this gift everything that your body, soul and spirit need. Although love will not replace the main factors of health and will not give you anything material, it will permeate all your thoughts and feelings and endow you with the most mighty force in the entire Universe. It will be present in every deed of yours and leave its trace in any communication, and even after your death it will continue to exert that influence on your neighbors that was not noticeable during your lifetime.

My wife and I are learning the art of love for each other and see how it brings happiness, joy, peace and such blessings of God's presence into our home that we had not even dreamed of in our boldest prayers.

One day my wife asked me to take her to see a women's doctor, and then walk through the shops with her and help her choose some clothing for me. I prepared myself for this trial and decided to categorically refuse everything unnecessary that the salespeople would offer me.

Having arrived at the doctor's office, I remained waiting for my wife in the car and decided to read another useful book. During the fascinating reading I didn't notice how much time had passed, but when my spouse appeared, I looked at my watch and asked what she had been doing at the doctor's for so long.

She was smiling mysteriously somehow and handed me some strange photograph in response, where against a black and white background a dark spot was visible, and said: "Here's a gift for you from the Lord." I turned this sheet in different directions and tried to find with my eyes the familiar outline of some object, but besides the dark spot, I found nothing else. And suddenly it dawned on me! I remembered that my wife had been at the women's doctor, and apparently they had done an ultrasound on her and found inside her what she had come to show me. Vague doubts crept into my heart - could this be an embryo? I looked intently at my wife, then at the photograph, then at my wife again. And then she finished me off completely with her announcement: "Congratulations, dear, we're going to have a baby!" These words sounded to me like thunder from a clear sky. It was difficult to describe those thoughts and feelings that unexpectedly crashed down on me. Somewhere in my soul I was ready for this event and had even talked a lot about it with my beloved, but when I was confronted with the fact, I was simply confused by such a turn of events.

I understood that a new page of interesting trials had opened in our life, which would bring us new knowledge and experiences and reveal to us something so great and inaccessible that we don't know. Although we live in a world where it's customary to have children, and there's nothing special about this, but when you hear about it for the first time, you experience indescribable emotions. At that moment I wanted both to cry and to rejoice, to thank God and to hide from reality. I understood that everything that had been up to this moment had gone into the past, and a new stage of life had begun, which had already changed everything in our plans. And the only thing I was still capable of in this dialogue was to hug my wife and express my joy with the words: "Thank you, dear. I'm so glad!" Perhaps she was expecting something more from me, but I was so shocked by this news that I simply forgot about everything in the world and was very confused.

My spouse took the initiative into her hands and asked to go to the clothing store. I immediately protested: "What clothing? We're going to have a baby! Let's go buy him something!" She

understood my condition and informed me that this event would be in about 8 months and there was no need to panic. I gradually began to come to my senses and started thanking God for such a wonderful gift. All the remaining time I only thought about the addition and about how to live now, since I'm completely unprepared to become a dad. Upon arriving home, I suggested holding an extraordinary family council, and we postponed all our current affairs and gathered to discuss what had happened. I was surprised by my spouse's calmness and how logically she expressed her plans for the future, what she expected from me, and where the baby's crib would stand. And I wanted to know who we would have, a boy or a girl, and couldn't decide what would be better. But then I understood that this question was in God's power, and however He decided, let it be so. We will accept whoever He gives us. But fears began to appear in my heart that the Lord might give us a sick or imperfect little person, or there might be a miscarriage. But I also understood that it wasn't worth expressing these concerns aloud. It's better to rely on God's mercy and providence.

Having discussed everything that worried and concerned us, we decided that it would be good to refresh all our knowledge about raising children before this child came into the world.

I had heard somewhere that the time of pregnancy is also an important event for the birth of a healthy child, and decided to thoroughly investigate this question so as not to allow anything that could bring misunderstandings and irreversible consequences into the life and health of my wife and children. I understood that now I needed to ask for twice as much love as before, and to be very delicate and thoughtful.

We also had the question of when a child becomes a living soul. When born, or when conception occurred? It was important to understand this in order to realize when we become parents, and what happens inside the womb. As a result, understanding this question from the example of Jesus's transformation from God into man helped us greatly. At some moment He was no longer in Heaven, and He miraculously became a seed that was placed in Mary's womb. It was precisely at this moment that the

Lord became human and a living soul, while remaining God, but not having Divine memory of the past. So, a living soul had settled inside my wife, which took a part of my nature and a part of my spouse's, in order to become our child. This is so interesting! Our likeness will appear in this world, which will inherit our nature, but at the same time will be a completely different and unique being.

We live in the age of information, and therefore it wasn't difficult for us to find those resources that describe in detail and wisely the development of the embryo and how one needs to behave and what to eat during the development of the embryo. The fetus requires many nutrients, which it can only take from the mother's organism, so we decided to thoroughly study this topic and if possible acquire those products that would restore the necessary resources and nourish the growing child.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Ps.126:3-5; Jer.33:3; Gen.1:27-28; Deut.7:13; 28:24; Prov.2:10-13; 10:28; 14:8,10; Luke.1:26-35; Eccl.3:2; Is.65:23 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What do you think men experience when they hear news about the birth of their firstborn?
5. Is it worth studying the principles of child-rearing when you don't have them yet or they have already grown up?
6. Who are children?
7. The appearance of first children — is it joy or stress?
8. Do you think the first child causes positive stress in parents when they learn about his conception?
9. Are you amazed by the greatness of creating a new person in the womb of another person?
10. Do you understand what trust Heaven shows us by giving us the opportunity to bring children into this world?
11. When does a child become a living soul? Why do you think so?

12. In giving us children, does the Lord also place responsibility on us?
13. What does knowledge about how to live and behave during pregnancy give me?
14. Why did the Lord choose specifically woman for giving birth to a child?

## Pregnancy

An unusual period of getting to know each other began in our family. It's called "pregnancy." If we say that this is only a trial for the woman who carries the child, that sounds rather strange. We are one flesh, and everything that happens within our family and with each of us affects both of us.

My wife at first didn't realize or suspect at all that she was pregnant, although, as we were told, there are special urine tests by which one can determine the presence of fertilization. But we initially gave this question to God and asked Him to notify us about what happened at the right time. When my wife had a delay of the usual period, she didn't say anything to me about it, but decided to wait a little, and then undergo examination by a women's doctor. Anything can happen, and she didn't want to worry me without good reason. But when she received testimony about the conception of new life, she could no longer contain her joy.

The psychological approach during pregnancy is very important, since a global restructuring of all functions occurs in the female organism, and this can result in mental disorders, general malaise, constant nausea and fatigue, for which we are not prepared.

I already knew something about this period, but didn't particularly go into details, but now I wanted to study everything thoroughly and become a specialist in this area.

Since I like the practical use of acquired knowledge, I decided to also be pregnant for a while to better understand my spouse's condition. I sewed myself a special belt on the sewing machine, which was attached to the lower back, and had a bag in front for filling with weights. To avoid causing unnecessary questions from strangers, I initially put heavy metal objects in this belt, and then decided during vacation to carry a large watermelon for several days. While the weights were light and compact, one could adapt to them and somehow carry them,

but when it came to the watermelon, something began that I don't really want to describe.

We went to the countryside at this time so as not to attract special attention to me. Our experiments greatly amused my wife, and she followed me with interest, being distracted from her concerns. My daily routine turned into something very heavy in the lower part of the body. Any walks were an amazing endurance test for me, and I impatiently awaited each evening when I could lie on my side and relax.

Although I understand that such experiments shouldn't be conducted and prolonged, as they can cause unforeseen muscle and spine injuries, at least a few hours of practicing something similar should be done to immerse oneself in the inner world of a pregnant woman.

When I, having experienced such a trial, removed all the weight from myself, I felt so sorry for my spouse. I understood what she would have to face and what she couldn't avoid. This understanding helped later to calmly accept all her whims and be ready for any turn of events.

As is known, from conception to birth the fetus develops over the course of 9 months. Although the restructuring of the woman's organism begins from the first day of conception, in the first months this may not announce itself at all.

The child's body needs everything necessary for its construction, and the baby doesn't ask permission for this or that material, but takes the necessary components from mom and makes them part of itself.

We studied this question, and we were given such a breakdown of what products and vitamins are necessary to take on which week to restore the necessary balance.

A woman's breast begins to increase slightly in size at a certain time, which can cause additional pain and unpleasant sensations.

Some women may experience depression or toxicosis may begin, and some may have both simultaneously. In our case,

starting from the third month, nausea appeared, which periodically resulted in vomiting. And this condition lasted approximately until the seventh month, sometimes subsiding, sometimes intensifying. But this isn't a rule for all pregnant women, but rather was our trial. We tried many different pieces of advice, and the only thing that helped us was eating sunflower seeds. The nausea would pass, but body weight increased.

At some point in the pregnancy my spouse stopped approaching the mirror so as not to get upset, and she didn't care anymore how she looked. My spouse didn't want to primp at all.

Our family councils became more frequent and came down to me having to patiently listen to how my wife felt, and dream about when all this would end. But at the same time we learned to rejoice in the upcoming events connected with the appearance of a new little person, and dreamed about what he would be like, and how wonderful it would be.

We prayed a lot and studied the works of those people who taught us through their books how to raise our child so as to later obtain eternal blessing, having in our family one more righteous person.

We also found courses in psychological support for pregnant women, where they told us about what women and their husbands face during this time, what happens in the organism, and how it's better to behave during this period. They also taught us what stretching and relaxation exercises are worth doing, and what shouldn't be done. I was surprised that being pregnant is a whole science that includes all aspects for normal interaction of spirit, soul and bodies of both spouses. At these courses my wife became acquainted with other future mommies and very quickly became friends with them. While I worked outside the home, they visited each other, sharing their problems and knowledge, supporting one another and sympathizing with each other. And then I listened every evening about new discoveries and about how soon all this would end with childbirth.

For many families the time of pregnancy can become a serious trial of faithfulness and patience. Unfortunately, many husbands don't want to delve into their spouse's problems, into what she faces, and how hard it is for her. They only wait for a ready child to brag about this before their friends and relatives, but don't want to delve into their woman's inner world and participate in her concerns and experiences. But a woman very much needs her husband's support, even if she doesn't want to see him.

Even if a pregnant wife declares her strange desires and new tastes that don't fit into male logic, a man shouldn't focus attention on these things and find fault with something, defending something. You are dealing with a unique creation whose mood can change so quickly in one direction or another that you need to be ready for any trial and accept everything with patience and love, agreeing with everything, if it doesn't kill you. This trial is temporary, and you need to set yourself up for the fact that it will soon end, and everything will be different. Such a period is laid by God into the formation of our relationships and characters, so the Lord also provides necessary support during this time. There's no general rule for everyone, and even a repeated pregnancy in the same family can proceed completely differently. But the first time is always special.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Eccl.11:5; Eph.5:25; John.13:34-35; Gen.3:16; Ruth 4:13; Luke.1:15; 2:3-7; Ps.21:10-11; 138:13-16; Is.46:3-4; 49:1; Hos.12:2-3; 2Kings.4:14-17 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What is pregnancy?
5. Is pregnancy only women's concerns, or is it an event for the whole family?
6. Should a husband remember that his wife is carrying his child too?
7. Do you think the relationship between parents during pregnancy affects the character of their future child?

8. Is it necessary to study the principles of child-rearing before their appearance in the world?
9. Should a husband understand what his wife experiences during pregnancy?
10. Where can one learn the correct behavior of a husband toward a pregnant wife?
11. Should one judge another woman who is carrying a child by one's own experience, or should each case be considered separately?
12. Does the Lord know what happens in the heart, head and belly of a pregnant woman?
13. What benefit will knowledge about how a man needs to live and act during pregnancy bring?
14. What should you do if your spouse is indifferent to the fact that his child is growing in your belly?

## Responsibility Before God

We live in a world consisting of families in which children are born. And when we hear about population growth, this doesn't even surprise us. But how does God look at the birth of a child, and what does He expect from parents? What status do father and mother have in Heaven's eyes?

Observing the attitude toward children, you understand that a small child is a little doll who touches everyone around, so cute and all sweet. And they even say that the first child is a nanny, and the second is a baby. But let's soberly look at this Divine miracle.

A child is first of all a person who at each stage of his development from conception to birth, and then to old age and death, experiences the processes of growth and perfection laid into him. I think that many of you, looking at any child or teenager, will be able to quickly determine his age. But why? Because we all develop according to the same laws laid into us by God. But the very first days and years of life are the most important period, during which the foundation of his future character and behavior is laid into the mind of the little person, on which depends his further destiny and eternal fate.

God gives parents a clean sheet of paper of the human soul, where father and mother begin to write laws and rules, mistakes and sins, which become the driving force of the soul and its spiritual indicators when choosing the further path.

If someone thinks that children need to be raised when the child begins to understand or speak something, such a beginning will be too late. He who says that one needs to raise from the first day of birth will be right, but this too can turn out to be a very belated decision. The most daring will declare that the process of upbringing begins from conception, when you learned about the addition to your family. And they will be right.

Let's give as an example an officer who is entrusted with personnel with whom he must conduct military actions and

fulfill combat tasks set by his higher command. At what moment of his career can he be called a wise and successful commander? I think that they won't entrust anyone to him until he passes certain preparation and passes an exam on his qualification.

The same can be said about teachers, doctors, policemen and other servants who receive and have certain education before they begin to be entrusted with professional work with people. But when it comes to creating a family and raising a child, for some reason such ignorance and indifference is allowed in this sphere that one doesn't cease to be amazed and saddened, seeing multiplying misfortune and suffering, broken destinies and families. And then they go to God with all this, accusing Him and asking Him the question of why He allowed so much suffering and grief. After all, if He existed, He surely wouldn't have allowed such things. What can one answer to such statements?

But God has a special people who understand who man is, and where he came from, and what forces govern him.

Being parents is the most responsible profession in the entire Universe, because these very people, father and mother, create a masterpiece of the human soul, which was conceived for Eternal life and was not supposed to die because of old age or sin. They are given a unique opportunity to reveal God's image by their example to a new little person and to instill into his character the image and likeness of God. And it is precisely such a result that the Lord desires to see in the life of each growing person. God entrusts not a toy for amusement and touching, but a personality, a living person, albeit small, but real, growing according to a certain program. And he grows up someday.

Perhaps the reader of these lines thinks: "But why do I need to know this, since I don't have a family or children? And maybe I never will?" Tell me, but when do they prepare officer staff for war and defense of the Motherland? In peacetime, because during war ready specialists are needed, not students. And how

do you know what will be tomorrow, and what benefit the acquired knowledge will bring you?

God doesn't simply place responsibility on us in order to later ask us for an account, but also offers together with this His participation, cooperation, help and support in the matter of upbringing. Without Him we won't be able to do anything, and He knows this, so He doesn't leave us. Motherhood is a Divine instinct laid into every woman whom the Lord has determined to become the mother of His creation, so as to later adopt these people when they grow up and want to belong to God's family.

Everything that parents will sow into their child's mind, they will reap for all the remaining life. Everything that they don't want to sow with good seeds, the world will sow with its weeds, which will then have to be weeded all life long, sighing about missed opportunities.

I know one person who, not having light, raised his daughter as he could, applying all efforts to make a worthy person out of her. When his daughter went to school, he acquired a new book in the store called "Child Rearing," which previously hadn't existed in his native language. When he began to study it, he understood how much he had missed, and this could never be corrected. There was no limit to his despair and tears of soul, and he thought why no one had given him this information earlier. Now we have much literature and much light on questions of child-rearing, but what's surprising is that ignorance hasn't gone anywhere either. Many young parents think that they themselves know what to do with children, but a moment comes when they don't understand how to act with these little egoists who feel very well what to do with their foolish parents and how to get from them what the fleshly nature desires.

A child needs not only nutrition and clean clothes, but also understanding of his boundaries, rights and obligations, understanding of who he is and why he lives in this world. And into the task of father and mother enters complete explanation of all these questions in the right spirit.

Children are not asked permission for their appearance in the world. Not all children are desired and loved, and they feel and understand this, but this doesn't remove responsibility from parents and doesn't deprive them of the opportunity to change something for the better in the upbringing of children.

It's easier to give a young tree the needed form and direct branches in the right direction. Nothing can be changed in an old tree anymore. In the same way, it's simpler to give a small stream the needed direction, but nothing can be done with a full-flowing river anymore. It already has firm boundaries that confidently hold its channel.

Everything that was missed in the early years will be difficult to return, just as the past cannot be returned. But even if this happened, and I came to my senses only now, it's worth standing on the path of wisdom, love and friendship to give God the opportunity to turn everything to good. Love knows how to work miracles at any stage of upbringing and create something new and warm in the heart. And where it was cold, it becomes warm and cozy. At some moment of life God Himself can take the upbringing of a person into His hands, give birth to him for Himself and raise him for His Kingdom, granting at the beginning of this adoption wise teachers and mentors, preparing his heart for the Eternal.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Rom.14:12; Prov.1:8-9; 22:6; Ps.118:9; Eccl.1:15; 4:13; 11:5-6; Is.62:2-5; Matt.19:20-22; 2Tim.2:22; Heb.4:13; 13:17; 1Pet.3:15 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Who are children?
5. Is it important to understand one's responsibility before God for the upbringing of children?
6. Should those who don't have a family or children learn the principles of Christian upbringing?
7. Does the upbringing that was laid into him from childhood help an adult person?

8. Do you realize those mistakes that your parents made in your upbringing?
9. Should something be changed in one's approach to raising a child if you didn't know what it should be like, and did what you considered necessary? Judg.21:25.
- 10.Does correct upbringing help to later make the right choice?
- 11.Do children grow up similar to their parents in character and attitude toward others?
- 12.Why is it necessary to understand one's responsibility before God for the upbringing of the rising generation?
- 13.Will a child grow up if he is not raised? What will he become then?
- 14.How will God require an account for the influence exerted on children?

## Cooperation

To whom belongs that child whom my wife carries in her womb? If we say that to us, we would be partially right, but not completely. The Creator of this little person is the Lord God, Who in all His fullness applies all His creative power, wisdom and love in order to hand over at the right time into our hands a masterpiece of His creativity and entrust to our care the most unique personality in the entire Universe, which from the moment of birth possesses the most mighty forces: will, mind, instinct and passion, but does not yet have wisdom and life experience. All this enormous potential is laid into every human being, and it will form the child's character under the influence of the wise or unwise diligence of his parents or mentors.

Any smallest child is a person who belongs not only to his parents, but also to God, as well as to that state in which he was born, and on whose territory he lives. God's and state laws protect human life and health from the moment of his conception and appearance in the world, and we cannot engage in arbitrariness with impunity and cause harm to our children. But with all this, the child's parents have the most rights to him and receive unlimited power from God to form a worthy person, citizen and personality. And this person at a certain moment of his life will be able to begin an independent and autonomous life, create his family and bear his children. And this cycle of life is laid by God into humanity.

It's worth noting that, besides God, parents and the state, there are also mighty forces of evil, which also have plans for our children and tirelessly work to steal, kill and destroy them. And there are very many of them, and they exert evil influence both on the child's developing mind and on the parents' consciousness.

And in this confrontation wise parents need cooperation with Heavenly Divine Forces, of Whom there are much more, and They are much stronger. Relying only on myself and my human wisdom and intuition in the matter of raising children, I risk becoming easy prey for the evil one, who will be able to use my

tenderness and blind love so that I act at random and instead of benefit cause harm to the soul, thinking that sincere love will be enough to form righteous character in the rising generation. Love without knowledge and wisdom from above will be like a poor person who won a few million in the lottery but has no sense of how to use this money. One could safely assume that this "lucky one" will soon squander his "easy money" and become even poorer, but will have experience demonstrating his foolishness to his neighbors.

We, parents, have been shown trust from above, and the Lord, seeing our marital love for each other, has given us the fruit of this love, which will become our teacher, and thanks to which we will gain such experience that no one can give us.

In the matter of upbringing there is one peculiarity. We will not be able to properly raise a child without cooperation with God, and God will not raise this little person without cooperation with us. In raising a worthy person, cooperation of human and Divine forces is necessary. It's not difficult for God to endow parents with all the necessary qualities that will contribute to more successful formation of a worthy personality. The goal of upbringing should be not only teaching the child practical skills, but also instilling the spiritual component, so that he understands whose he is, why he lives, and what awaits him in the future. He must know the meaning of his life. And the Lord cooperates with us, granting us His wisdom, patience, intuition and love on a constant basis. Teaching us to raise children, He also instructs us to trust Him, be firm in truth, constant in principles, faithful in obedience to His will, observant, sensitive, sociable, very patient, condescending, kind, polite, capable of learning, like-minded and unanimous while being spouses who love each other. All these and other qualities of parental wisdom we did not inherit from birth and do not carry within ourselves. They will not bring great benefit if they are applied spontaneously or intuitively. If I have some principles and requirements today, and tomorrow I will have others, and then I'll think up something else, this is not wisdom from above. God gives and lays in us a firm foundation of His principles and shows the advantage of constancy in His requirements.

The Lord loves all His creation and cares for every living organism. He is the Giver of life and knows how to sustain it. Any person being born into our world is God's creation, but not yet a child of God. God has no grandchildren. He desires that every person be born from above for God's Kingdom, and this can happen only at a conscious age, when the child grows up and becomes independent. Until this moment children are credited with the righteousness of their parents, who put good seeds in the child's heart for a good harvest. The purpose of proper upbringing consists in laying in the foundation of the child's thinking the principles of God's law and understanding of dependence on Christ. Simply teaching good is good, but little. God needs not creation, but children born from above, who will become heirs of His Kingdom.

The Lord is more interested than we are in the salvation and acquisition of new souls. But having to deal with human choice and will, He respects what we choose, and doesn't interfere with us in this choice.

Any father and mother can boldly count on God's help and cooperation with Heavenly Forces in the matter of raising children. God will give everything necessary in this question and will apply His hand where there is need and necessity.

Raising children is not only influence on the mind of the person entrusted to you, but also constant struggle with yourself and with your fleshly inclinations.

The moment will never come when we, having shown all wisdom, invested all strength and given all of ourselves to the matter of raising children, decide that this is enough, and stop at what has been achieved. The child will continue to require and expect our complete self-sacrifice. And where human resources are exhausted, God's channels are activated and accomplish what needs to be done. God has not entrusted us with something impossible that requires superhuman efforts, but gives exactly as much as is necessary for today, and does this so naturally that we sometimes don't notice His hand in the process of upbringing. He gives us each morning only one day,

in which we will be able to receive exactly what will be useful to us today and what we will be able to pass on further.

When my wife and I are taught to love each other, then it will be very simple for us to pass this knowledge to our offspring and teach children to live with the same spirit. In union with God everything is much simpler and easier than we imagine. It's not children who raise us, but we them. They don't dictate to us what they need, but we form their way of thinking. And all this happens in a joyful spirit and in unity with God. And while we are pregnant, we still have time to prepare our backpacks for the journey into the child's world.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Matt.7:7-14; 28:18-20; Josh.1:9; Prov.14:29; 16:32; 20:11; 22:6; Eccl.7:8; John.17:21-22; Luke.1:14-17; Phil.2:13; 4:8-9; 1Pet.1:14-16; 1Cor.7:14 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What is cooperation with God?
5. Will God cooperate with those who ask Him for this?
6. How to understand that God will help us in raising children who don't exist yet?
7. Should one fear bearing children into this dangerous world?
8. Is it difficult for God to help us in raising children in all difficult trials?
9. Does it gladden you that we have Such a Wise and Strong Mentor in Heaven?
10. What qualities of soul are very necessary for parents in raising children?
11. What does love without wisdom and revelation from above represent? Can it bring harm to a child?
12. Do you think God's participation plays any role in forming a person's personality?
13. Why is it so important to cooperate with Heaven in the matter of upbringing?
14. Why doesn't God raise children without human participation?

## Double Care

Desiring to have healthy offspring, a person must understand the laws of this health, study them and follow them. Health is not an accident and not a random gift from Heaven that like a lucky lottery fell into your life, but it is conscious knowledge of God's principles and their reasonable practical implementation in our life.

Understanding that a third person had appeared in my family, who had not yet been born but already existed and needed special care for himself and his mother, I decided to study everything connected with this period. I wanted to know how to behave, how our relationship affects the intrauterine development of the child, what my wife needs to do, and what she should refrain from. It turns out that the pregnancy period is the most responsible time when the future child's character is laid, his inclinations toward sin, his physical and emotional health. We again and again understood that we could not do without God's help, and therefore every morning we began with sincere prayers for Divine guidance for both of us, for wisdom from above and for special light for our case.

My wife's appetite became so capricious, and her toxikosis so exhausting, that the time of preparing and eating food was a severe trial for her, which she decided to endure in a life-affirming spirit.

I had to work outside the home to provide the financial side of our life, and then, coming home, I tried to take upon myself that part of everyday cares that greatly depressed my spouse.

Studying the principles of nutrition during pregnancy, we decided to be guided by common sense and eat what specialists recommend, not what the flesh dictates. The fetus requires certain substances for its development, and the organism can receive and give them only from what we eat. Therefore we tried to carefully select our menu, but at the same time also refrain from overeating and snacking between meals.

Exceptions were additional vitamins and school chalk, which my

spouse for some reason came to love so much. I bought it by whole packages every week, which surprised the sellers who couldn't understand what I did with it. And when I answered them that I feed this to my wife, they were even more surprised. I understood that not all pregnant women need such food, but my spouse was ready to scrape plaster from the walls just to get the desired product.

In our communication we were already taught mutual love and positive attitude toward life, but frequent ailments and hormonal swings often deprived my spouse of peace and made her very capricious because of some trifles. I tried to do everything possible so that peace and joy would always be in our home, and apologized for any reason, just not to evoke an alien spirit and not allow unnecessary conflicts. We learned that such home atmosphere is transmitted to the child, and he will have inclinations toward such a spirit if we practice disagreements during pregnancy.

My wife also learned how her emotional state is transmitted to the child, and therefore did everything possible on her part to be positive, understanding my care for her too.

The closer the end of pregnancy was, the bigger our mommy's belly grew, and the more discomfort she experienced. She began to be bothered by frequent urination, but with a minimal amount of liquid. Apparently, the fetus was pressing on something in her organism and giving a signal that it was time to go to the toilet, but in essence, there was no great need for this.

A clear understanding that a living soul was inside my wife came to us when the fetus began to move inside the womb. This was always interesting and amusing. And the bigger the belly grew, the more active the baby became inside his mother. Through the belly walls one could feel his little head or other parts of the body.

Closer to birth my wife began to speak more often with her future child, stroking her little belly and humming quiet songs.

We also learned about benefits and promotions that the state and some humanitarian organizations conducted as support for families expecting addition. Somewhere we were given one-time material assistance, somewhere they gave gifts, and somewhere they made discounts on buying necessary things and goods. But we needed to find out about this ourselves, walk around and ask, since each region had its own rules. These little things, although they didn't affect our budget, brought pleasant variety to our everyday routine.

Sleep was also a special time of trial for my wife. For obvious reasons she couldn't lie on her stomach and couldn't always fall asleep when bedtime came. And sometimes during the day her organism got so tired that she would leave everything and disconnect from the world for a couple of hours. I always had to adapt to this new schedule and change many joint plans. But I understood that it wouldn't be like this forever, and this gave strength to experience everything in a positive spirit.

We also took care that my spouse's body was protected from unnecessary overcooling and from excessive overheating. Doctors forbade her to take hot baths so that miscarriage wouldn't occur, and we used a warm shower throughout the entire pregnancy.

In the matter of clothing my wife at first tried to select something that would suit her in color and taste, but closer to birth she began to put on what was comfortable, natural and practical, and she didn't care anymore how she looked.

It was also interesting to observe other people's attitude toward my spouse. Sometimes there was such an impression that angels accompanied her and opened doors for her everywhere. Many people met her with special respect, gave her their place, let her pass out of turn, helped carry bags and did much of what she didn't ask anyone for. And she stored all this in her heart and every evening told about the next blessings that she experienced during the day.

We also noticed that as many people there were, so many diverse pieces of advice there were for our case. And what we

didn't hear! And the closer the person was, the more insistently he recommended to us his vision and his lifestyle during pregnancy. And we tried to listen to everyone and engage common sense, being guided by the light that we received from the books of the Spirit of Prophecy and from professionals in this matter. Knowledge of the basics of physiology and psychology of mother and child during fetal development helped us make wise decisions and protected us from many dangerous recommendations, bringing visible blessings and protection from many troubles.

But ahead were the birth, which we couldn't avoid in any way, and this event stressed us with its uncertainty and unpredictability. However, we gave this question too into God's hands and allowed Him to decide everything as was pleasing to Him. We very much needed God's peace, and the Lord gave this to us in full measure. We so wanted our child to be filled with the Holy Spirit from the mother's womb like the prophet John, and our daily prayers were about this action from God's side. Although we didn't see a direct answer to these prayers, we believed that something was happening, and the Lord would definitely answer as would be pleasing to Him.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Rom.15:1-2; 1Pet.3:7; Eph.5:25; Luke.1:15; John.3:6; Judg.13:3-4,7-8,12-14; Job.14:1; 15:14; 1Tim.5:14 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Do you think pregnant women need special care and attention?
5. From which month of pregnancy should one especially care for a woman?
6. Does the pregnant mother's mood affect the formation of her future child's character?
7. Why did the Lord put the emotional component of his mother into the development of the child's character?
8. Does a pregnant woman's nutrition affect her child's health?

9. Are prayers about filling the future child with the Holy Spirit appropriate?
10. When can or should one dedicate one's children to God?
11. Do you understand the importance of God entrusting a living soul with a clean conscience to the parents' power?
12. Why is it accepted to consider that babies are already born egoists?
13. Does mutual love of spouses help to have a correct understanding of what approach the child needs?
14. Do you think loving husband and wife can transfer the model of these relationships to their offspring too?

## Preparation for Birth

Preparing for the birth of a child, we didn't sit idly by, but studied everything that would add to our knowledge and help in raising the child whom the Lord would give us. We very much wanted to know who we would have, a boy or a girl, but we were advised not to do ultrasound unnecessarily, since these waves can negatively affect the embryo, and the doctor can't always see the child's gender. We learned that through a special blood test one can unfailingly determine whom we are expecting, and we decided to take this test. It turned out to be not cheap, but we were given the result. It will be a girl. What did this change? Absolutely nothing.

We also understood that the birth of a new person would be connected with large expenses, and decided to make an appeal among our friends, relatives and fellow believers that they share with us children's things if they have such, and they don't need them. To our surprise, we were given so much that it seemed to us that this would be enough until the teenage period. My wife carefully looked through everything, washed it again and put it in the bedroom closet. Besides this, she looked at all kinds of sales of children's accessories and sometimes acquired quality things at low prices.

Studying intrauterine development and fetal physiology, we learned that hearing in a baby develops by the 21st week, and by his heartbeat doctors were able to determine that from this time he begins to react positively to familiar voices that sound in a calm rhythm, and the mother's voice is transmitted to the child also through the internal vibration of her body. We also learned that all discoveries about the development of children's intellect during intrauterine development are presumptive, since these little beings cannot tell us what they experience and feel, what they understand and what affects them. The books of the Spirit of Prophecy in this sense carry more assertions, since this knowledge was given to the author from above, and we decided to trust God and accept all His advice and recommendations, watching ourselves in what we do and say.

Our pregnancy changed a lot in our daily schedule and in our relationship. We became even closer to each other and decided to agree about everything. And this turned out to be quite uncomplicated when you have mutual love in relationships.

A real person will be born to us, albeit very small and helpless, but alive and promising. And everything that we put into her will either gladden or grieve us. We decided to rejoice.

Since many new knowledge had practical foundation, sometimes we conducted experiments in which I or my spouse played the role of daughter. A certain situation was created in which we acted out our reaction to this or that event, and then together discussed how to act correctly and how to behave.

For example, I "came from kindergarten" and asked mom about the meaning of many obscene words that I "heard from other children." Mom was horrified by such vocabulary, but patiently listened to me, and then began to explain to me that these are very bad words that shouldn't be repeated, and then found a better replacement for vulgar expressions and taught me polite words. Not everything worked out for us on the first try. Sometimes my spouse simply didn't want to hear something that hurt her ears, but we understood that life could present us with all kinds of surprises, and it's better to go through all this in theory to be ready for any unexpected situations.

When there was opportunity, my wife would sit on our favorite couch with armrests, and I would lie nearby, put my head on her legs so that the baby could hear me better, and so we communicated. They say that children have very good memory, and they absorb everything they hear, so we decided to introduce our offspring to our society as early as possible.

During general prayer, when my wife and I knelt down, I always chose a place to be closer to her belly, and tried to pronounce my requests to Heaven louder. I don't know how correct this was, but we wanted to start putting as many good things as possible into our still unborn daughter.

Regarding our phones we decided to use them as little as possible near the belly and mother's ear, since we didn't fully

understand what influence the electromagnetic radiation of this device has on fetal development. And if we needed to talk, my wife would put on headphones and hold the smartphone as far from herself as possible.

At some point in our pregnancy we decided to refrain from any kinds of intimate relations and gave this question to God, asking Him for the gift of abstinence, and behaved so as not to be a temptation for each other. We didn't understand how correct and necessary this was, since we didn't know the exact answer and heard different contradictory opinions. Therefore we decided not to risk and calmed down. And my wife's difficult condition distracted us from this, and we had very fun time without unnecessary entertainment.

We also sang many Christian hymns together and listened to spiritual songs in calm rhythm. We made the decision to avoid, when possible, noisy events where one could experience unnecessary stress or very loud sounds, and we began to politely decline many offers, referring to our special situation. People related to us with understanding and always accommodated us.

We weren't ashamed to turn to our family and multi-child friends for advice and attentively listened to all those experiences and instructions that they gave us. And we wrote down the most important moments of this communication, and then discussed them together, trying to understand what awaited us in the future. Judging by the stories, a merry life with many discoveries and blessings awaited us. Sometimes fears came - what if something would be wrong, what if it wouldn't work out as needed... But thanks to sincere prayer all these fears quickly left us, and peace came.

Our parents always supported us and were glad to help as they could, understanding us without unnecessary words.

There was a case when my spouse was getting something from the upper shelf of the closet, and then decided out of habit to jump from the chair to the floor. She had such pains in her belly that we began to fear that there would be a miscarriage. We

made a prayer appeal among friends, and through our prayers everything came to normal, and we decided not to engage in such acrobatics anymore and take care of ourselves as much as possible.

It was decided to give birth together, so that I would also be present at the birth. We began to inquire whether such a thing was possible, and having learned that this is widely practiced, we found a suitable maternity hospital and agreed that we would be together at the birth.

Closer to the birth date my spouse's toxycosis began to pass, but other specific problems appeared in the lower part of the body, which are uncomfortable to write about, and we decided to go out to nature more often, admiring the beauties of God's creation.

We understood that the Lord was giving us a new friend in the family, with whom our life until the last minute would be connected by the strongest bonds of love, and we were very interested in how this new little person would fit into our life, who he would be, what would come of him. But we were also gladdened by the fact that everything is in our hands, and the Lord will apply His hand, and together we will accomplish something.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Ps.91:5-7; 138:13-17; Prov.1:5,8-9,23; 3:13; 4:7; 8:11-12; 12:1; 14:8; Is.65:22-24; Jer.29:5-7; Eccl.3:1-2; 8:1 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Should one prepare for significant events before they happen?
5. Should one apply acquired knowledge in practice?
6. Do practical exercises reinforce the theory that we learn from wise people?
7. What benefit will the acquired knowledge and skills that I gain before I need it bring?

8. Is the appearance of a person in the world something ordinary that doesn't require preparation, or is it something special that needs proper attention?
9. What should someone do who has so many important things that there's no time for his pregnant wife?
10. Will knowledge about how the fetus develops help make correct decisions and lead an appropriate lifestyle?
11. Does God want to be glorified through your wife's pregnancy?
12. How does the pregnancy of a knowing and understanding family differ from one that doesn't want to know anything?
13. Does the Lord grant His blessings to those who want to know everything and understand everything?
14. What should those do who want to know everything but don't have the opportunity to get necessary information from somewhere?

## Time to be Born

We read: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die..." Eccl. 3:1-2.

The most interesting time of our pregnancy began before the birth. We knew the approximate date established by the women's doctor, but no one could tell us when everything would happen. We were warned that contractions could begin at any time, so we shouldn't plan distant travels.

Once I worked with a man who was born aboard an airliner. He was assigned lifetime right to use free flight services of this airline, but he didn't plan to fly anywhere and had a very negative attitude toward this type of transport. My wife and I discussed this prospect too, but then decided not to tempt the Lord and not risk the life of mother and child.

I immediately told my wife that if during birth there arose a choice of life and death between her and the baby, I would choose her. Although this was my firm position, I didn't want to lose the child either. Therefore we prayed according to promises and asked the Lord to bless the time of birth and provide everything in the best way.

I agreed with neighbors that they would take my spouse to the maternity hospital if I wouldn't be home during contractions. Then we found a list of nearest taxis, if the neighbors wouldn't be home either. And as a last resort we were advised to call an ambulance.

My wife's condition inspired optimism. Toxicosis hadn't manifested for a long time, but there were problems with sleep and the toilet. My spouse only dreamed that someone would support her belly when she walked somewhere. And she very much wanted to lie on the bed face up and fall asleep in that position. But there were certain circumstances under which this dream could not be fulfilled.

The appointed dates passed, and some people advised us to do a cesarean section, but we decided to give birth naturally, since this strengthened the baby's immune system, although it caused pain to the woman in labor.

And then came that very interesting day, which was no different from others. During usual shopping at the store the cashier asked my wife when she would give birth. Answering, my wife joked that today. This was Friday. Upon arriving home we sat down to dinner, and then planned to go for a walk. Suddenly my spouse announced that her water was breaking. I got scared and decided that labor had begun, and started running around the house, gathering all the towels. We took the pre-prepared bag and went to the maternity hospital. Although I was in a great hurry, I decided to drive according to the rules so as not to create an emergency situation.

At the maternity hospital we were calmly received and told not to worry, since the cervix wasn't completely open yet, and although birth would happen soon, not right now. My wife was taken to a ward where there were three other women in labor waiting for their hour. I sat by my spouse's bed for a while and, so as not to interfere and embarrass other women, went to the waiting room next to the ward. There I prayed for protection for my wife and fell asleep right on the chairs. Early in the morning my beloved came and, seeing that I had awakened, began to complain to me about her well-being and that contractions were beginning, which caused severe pain, plus some other delicate things had emerged that caused discomfort. The doctors did what they could, and then threw up their hands and said we had to wait, supposedly everything would pass after birth. They could speed up this process, but without our request they offered nothing and undertook nothing. And we didn't know that we could ask. So Saturday passed. Although we were at peace, my wife's belly pains intensified, but labor still didn't begin. I asked the doctors about whether this process could be accelerated. To which they answered positively and, having received my consent, took my wife and took her to the ward, dressed her in special clothes, washed her inside and put in an IV.

I sat next to the bed on a chair and observed what was happening. My wife began having contractions, during which she moaned loudly, and then the moan turned into a cry. By the doctors' reaction I understood that this was a normal process, and quietly stroked my spouse's hand. In the break between contractions she asked for water, and the nurse brought us a thermos with mint tea and a jar with sugar. I gave my wife drinks, and when her next contractions began, I drank this tea myself and observed the events. During another pause the nurse asked me if I wanted to eat a sandwich, since it was their dinnertime, to which I declined, since I considered this completely improper.

And then the contractions became so frequent that my wife screamed without stopping. Although we were taught not to make unnecessary noise during birth, my spouse couldn't contain these cries and could no longer control anything. I also couldn't help in any way and quietly prayed, remembering the promise from Gen.3:16, that in sorrow you will bring forth children. Suddenly many doctors appeared, and they began to busily fuss around my wife's legs. Then I too perked up, got out my camera and began filming everything from the side of my wife's head, trying not to miss anything. It was so interesting to observe the appearance of a new person in the world!

And here this miracle of blue color of female gender lies at her mother's feet and gives her piercing protest to this world in the form of desperate crying. All this is so amazing! The doctors clamped the child's umbilical cord and cut it above the clip. And then the nurse took our daughter in her arms and carried her to wash. I ran up to her and asked to give me my child, saying I would wash her myself. She agreed and handed me this God's gift, showing how to properly hold by the shoulder during bathing so that the little head would lie on my arm. I began to wash my treasure and tried to understand whom she looked like more.

Meanwhile the doctors waited for the continuation of contractions so the placenta would come out. I calmly washed my daughter and told her that I was her dad, that Jesus loved

her, that everything was wonderful. I told her not to be afraid of anything. And she quietly blinked her eyes and attentively listened to me. Apparently she recognized my voice and tried to match the image with imagination.

When the birth was over, the doctors said that everything was in order, the placenta turned out to be undamaged. They washed and changed my spouse, who lay on the bed in exhaustion. I asked to take a group photo for memory and, thanking them for everything, wished them God's blessings.

Finally my wife came to herself and asked to give her the daughter. Taking her in her arms, she broke into a smile and no longer wanted to let this treasure go. I only heard: "How small she is! What little hands! What little ears! What little eyes!" In one word, a miracle of God's creativity from our material.

The nurse said for my wife to bring the child to her breast, and this little person already perfectly knew what to do, and began to frantically suck the breast, trying to squeeze something out of there. I marveled at those instincts that had already come into force from the moment of birth. Although my wife didn't have milk yet, colostrum came from the breast, which is very important for the newborn as the first portion of natural immunity. After an hour of life the child fell fast asleep in mom's arms, and we were taken to the ward. I went home to finish the Sabbath day and thanked God for everything, rejoicing in the work of His hands, that everything was very good.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Gen.3:16; 4:1-2; John.16:21; Is.9:6; 21:3; 26:17; 45:10; 66:9; Jer.49:24; Gal.4:4-5; Ruth 4:13; Matt.1:24-25; Heb.11:11 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What useful thing did you learn for yourself?
4. Is it possible to give birth on Sabbath? Is this not a violation of God's commandment?
5. Will the husband's presence during birth be support for the wife?

6. Do you think the first minutes of contact with his parents affect the child's further life?
7. Why do some women have births that pass quickly and painlessly, while others experience birth pangs?
8. Do you know such people who, while expecting birth, were afraid that nothing would work out for them? How can such people be helped?
9. Why has the miracle of human birth become an ordinary phenomenon for us and doesn't even surprise us anymore?
10. Is the appearance of their child a special event for father and mother?
11. What should be done if one wants to have children in marriage, but something isn't working out?
12. Why are sick children born to healthy parents?
13. What should husband and wife know about birth?
14. Is it possible and would it be right to give birth at home?

## Born to Live

Someone expressed this thought: "He who is born twice will die only once or will not see death at all." God arranged the Universe according to the type of a large family, where all His intelligent creation at birth falls into a society of beings like themselves. All heavenly beings were created by the Lord for Eternal life, and God's plans did not include dividing the heavenly family into two warring camps.

But God foresaw such a situation, and He had a special plan for saving those who would choose the Creator and want to be with Him always, accepting into their heart the fullness of truth. This plan is called "birth from above for Eternal life."

Any intelligent creation of God was born into this world to live, whether angels, heavenly beings or people. But due to the appearance of sin in the Universe all this creation faced a choice that offered two paths. The first path is birth from above and receiving the right to Eternal life. The second path is life in sin and receiving the right to eternal death. Every intelligent being was given freedom of choice of one of these paths and respect for the decision that was made. In each case the Lord sows His seed of truth in the form of light and abundance of God's grace and love, so that it would exist, sprout and give a chance to each being to make a choice between one path or another. If this seed is rejected by free will, then the soul can no longer experience birth from above, and it is doomed to certain destruction, although for some time it can still live and perform some deeds. In case of accepting God the seed of the Holy Spirit begins to develop in the heart and prepares it for birth from above to receive the right to Eternal Life. Then the person becomes a son or daughter of God. This Plan of Salvation was offered to the entire Universe when sin originated in it, and was subsequently transferred to the fallen Earth, where people created by the Creator fell and lost the status of holy beings.

We don't know how God's plan was implemented in the life of angels. One can only guess about this, but we know that the

Lord yesterday, today and forever is the same, and His law is constant and relevant at all times, and the Sacrifice offered at Golgotha was perhaps paid not only for fallen humanity, but extends much further than we imagine.

Birth from above or, as Jesus calls it in John 3:5, birth from water and Spirit is a spiritual event in which human will and Divinity participate. Man without God will not be able to accomplish this process, and the Holy Spirit without man will not do this. Here harmony and agreement are needed.

In Luke 8:11 we read: "The seed is the word of God," in another place the Lord teaches: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the sons of the kingdom..." Matt 13:37-38. Further we read in Rom 9:8: "That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed."

Birth from above is a process in which God's Word, having entered the heart of the listener or reader, begins to sprout and take root, changing consciousness in accordance with God's will and God's plan. The will agrees that God's Word is pure and beneficial for the soul, and begins to adjust to God's requirements, establishing itself on this foundation. And then it becomes so firmly rooted in truth that it no longer wants and cannot live otherwise. When it is asked whether it agrees to live for God, follow Jesus, be obedient to His Spirit, then it no longer conceives another path for itself. It is born for life in the presence of Divinity. And water baptism registers this birth from above, which can occur either before it or after.

At the creation of the earth God put into water the power to produce a living soul. Gen.1:20. And during water baptism a special mystery of the manifestation of God's power in the birth of a new person occurs.

Without God's sown seed and its establishment in man's heart, baptism with water becomes ordinary washing, which changes nothing in life, although in some cases it can serve as motivation for deeper study and acceptance of truth.

People not born from above are God's creations, whom the Lord cares for, whom He loves and desires to save. But they are not His children, and therefore the world has full right to their life, and the enemy of the soul can work his arbitrariness over them as he is permitted. But Jesus came to save this world, and He tirelessly works, sowing the seed of truth through His messengers.

A person born from above, although he receives power for independent development, still needs a family of his own kind, in which he can develop comprehensively and grow spiritually. For this the Lord created the church.

God doesn't abandon His children after their birth from above, but receives full right to their upbringing, instruction and guidance through life, paying no attention to the claims of the enemy of the soul, who seeks opportunities to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

The enemy of the soul knows that if God's person gets into bad company, his good morals will be corrupted, so he tries to bring unconverted people into God's church, convincing them that their salvation depends on belonging to this organization. But this doesn't save.

The Lord gave the definition that the visible indicator of the life of a person born from above is the presence of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which manifests itself not in its individual properties, but in all fullness, and love is the greatest of them, which gives taste and meaning to everything. Love is the blood in the body of a person born from above, which carries to every corner of his soul those nutritious truths that it dissolves in itself, in order to then enrich the entire nature of man with them.

As food, having entered the baby's womb, nourishes his entire body, giving him strength to grow and get stronger, so love contributes to faster growth and development of the spiritual person.

How to distinguish a living person from a dead one? In a living one there is breath, he wants to eat, and he is physically active.

Prayer spirit, thirst for knowledge of truth, walking in it and missionary activity are simple determiners that this person is born for God and that he is alive.

Wise upbringing, proper nutrition and active missionary activity form from a newly converted baby an adult Christian who can already be a teacher and educator of other children himself. Therefore the Lord not only teaches us good things, but also desires to use us as those through whom He will sow His seed and teach those born from above. In His family no one will remain without work.

Can you imagine what Heaven experiences, observing how instead of showing love for each other God's children begin to bite, envy, be haughty and beat those who are not like them? What should God do when instead of good seed His children sow tares and teach to live according to the flesh? What to do with those in whom love grows cold because of the multiplication of lawlessness? But God has a way out of this condition too. In Rev. 3:18 He gives advice to those who desire not only somehow to be saved, but also to be victorious in the last events of history. This way out is offered not to those dead in sins, but to the living, those who are born twice. But only those who have spiritual ears can hear this message, to hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Gal.3:29; Heb.2:16; 2Cor.9:10-11; Job.14:4; John.3:3-8; 8:33-35,38,44; 1John.2:1; 3:7-11; Rom.8:14-17 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What is birth from above?
5. Can a person not born from above be called a son or daughter of God?
6. How do you understand the process of birth from above?
7. Why is it impossible to unambiguously determine the time of spiritual birth?
8. What similarities do you see in spiritual and physical birth?

9. What is the difference between a carnal Christian and one who is born from above?
10. How can I determine whether I am born from above?
11. Why does the enemy of the soul attack more those who are born for God?
12. What should those do who want to become a son or daughter of God, but don't know how?
13. Can a person born from above think that he is still dead because of his sinful nature?
14. What is the difference between a son of God and creation?
15. Does God give birth to us in order to kill us for mistakes?

## The Miracle of God's Creativity

Christianity is not a religion of miracles in which wow-actions occur. Reading about Jesus's life, we see how many miracles were performed by His hands, how actively all kinds of evil spirits manifested themselves in His presence and how His words convinced many of the truth. All this was a manifestation of the supernatural God's power of the Holy Spirit, and no one could prevent God from doing what He wanted. But there were people who were skeptically disposed toward the Savior and didn't attach significance to all His miracles. Even when Lazarus was raised, these people decided to kill him too, so that he wouldn't testify to God's power and glory by his personal example.

If the Lord raised the dead every day, this would become an ordinary matter and all wow-moments would soon bore the viewers. But when God's miracle touches my heart, my problems and changes my life, then I perceive it completely differently.

Today we are surrounded by so many miracles that we are accustomed to, that they don't surprise us at all, although we cannot understand and explain them. And those who try to study another miracle, we call scientists and relate to them with respect.

Our child is a miracle of miracles, a miracle of God's creativity. Although many children are born into the world, and all of them are unique and unrepeatable in their own way, but when our daughter was born, I understood how unusual this little person is, what a miracle with boundless potential this is. And this miracle is considered not only my child, but is also God's property, which He entrusted to our power, endowing us with parental rights.

Holding in my arms three and a half kilograms of born happiness, I peered into this miracle and couldn't understand how such a being from nothing became such a perfect person.

Little ears, eyes, nose, mouth, hands and feet — all this was skillfully created from us inside my spouse and given to us forever. By default the doctors declared us parents of this child and, giving him to us, went to work with other patients.

What responsibility it is to be father and mother of God's creation, which still knows nothing, can do nothing, understands little and is not capable of distinguishing good from evil.

I read that first one king, and then other researchers conducted an experiment on newborn orphaned children, in which babies were only fed and changed. They weren't taken in arms and weren't spoken to. As a result all these children in all cases died. I was surprised by such a reaction of the human organism to indifference toward the emotional needs of man.

Nurses from orphanages tell that children who were abandoned by parents don't cry and make almost no sounds. They somehow understand that nobody needs them, and it's very difficult for them to understand the meaning of their life. Into this little creation is already laid the need to be loved and needed. And when the child feels this, he begins to cry, be capricious and dictate his rights to his place under the sun. Even when this child comes into the world, doctors wait for his first cry, which tells them that everything is wonderful, that the child is alive and capable of much.

It's difficult to convey what happens in your heart when you take this dear little person in your arms, press him to yourself and carry him like this, trying not to cause him discomfort. Something awakens in you that from the first minutes of life emotionally connects you forever, and you no longer imagine life without this being. And how deliciously they smell! I think that if someone asked how God smells, the most suitable answer would be the smell of a baby.

Hug babies under any pretext, because little children smell deliciously of God.

The first days of his life the child sleeps very much, and waking up, desires to deliciously eat mom, receive from her another

portion of warmth and tenderness and fall asleep further. There is nothing more useful and nutritious for a baby than his mommy's milk. Although breastfeeding can cause many inconveniences, and sometimes painful sensations, one shouldn't stop this action and replace it for comfort with artificial feeding. Together with mother's milk the child receives immune protection, necessary vitamins and minerals, emotional consolation, as well as much of what science hasn't yet discovered.

Understanding that our daughter can receive everything necessary only from mom, we paid special attention to the mother's nutrition, studying thoroughly what, when and how it's necessary to take. We carefully observed the reaction of the child's organism to those or other products that my wife ate, and then through her milk passed to our daughter. Sometimes the child couldn't suck out all the nourishment, and my spouse had to express milk into a jar so that burning of this product wouldn't occur in the breast. We decided to breastfeed our daughter as long as milk would be produced.

During breastfeeding a woman doesn't have usual feminine days, which can greatly gladden the husband and tempt him toward special attitude to his spouse. At this stage conception of the second child often occurs, which, although not bad in itself, may not please all women, since memories of pregnancy days and birth pains are still fresh in memory and can cause mental disorder.

Our daughter is still a very small and completely non-communicative little person. However, it's worth remembering that her brain records everything she sees, hears and feels. It analyzes the home atmosphere, remembers words and intonation, learns logic and absorbs everything it contacts. And I can perceive her as an unreasonable being who only eats and wets clothes. But this is the most powerful computer of human intellect, which, studying our world, logically composes all sounds and images, thoughts and feelings into a whole picture, in order to then give the person a whole worldview and personal perception of reality.

We heard from our mothers how many diapers and baby shirts they washed per day, but in our time this problem is solved very simply with the help of diapers, and your child is always dry and clean. True, with boys one needs to be very careful and not allow liquid to accumulate in the diaper, so that overheating of sexual organs doesn't occur, which can form future infertility.

Although we gradually enter into parental rights and learn much in forming the personality and character of our little princess, we don't forget that God is also the Heavenly Father of our daughter and desires to manifest His participation too in raising a worthy person. Therefore, as soon as we received this child in our hands and calmed down from all birth activities, we decided in personal prayer to dedicate our daughter to God and ask Him for special blessings for this child and for special participation in her life. With hope we brought our treasure in prayer of faith to our Lord and gave her destiny into the most reliable Hands of God, while leaving her to continue living in our family.

We believe that the Lord cooperates with parents at their request and faith in raising children and in forming their consciousness, so we always invoke God's name into our daughter's life too. We decided that it's better to pray more for our daughter than not to do this at all.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Ps.8:3; Luke.2:40; Is.7:14-15; 49:5; Gen.21:2-8; Ruth 4:13-16; Lev.12:2-6; 1Sam.1:9-11,20-23; Luke.1:80; 2:4-8,15-24 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. From what age should a child be perceived as a personality?
5. How can one determine the awakening of intellect in a newborn child?
6. When is it necessary to begin upbringing and education of one's child? How do you imagine this?
7. Why is it necessary to dedicate children to God?
8. Can a child be raised for God without God's help?

9. In what way does the Lord help parents in their upbringing of children?
10. At what age is God's help needed in raising a child?
11. When does upbringing begin? What age should one wait for?
12. Do relationships between husband and wife affect their children's characters?
13. What will happen if one doesn't pray to God for blessing children?
14. Do little family members surprise you? Where did they come from and become your relatives?

## The Most Important Person

The very first event after childbirth that my spouse had dreamed about for so long was lying on her stomach. She shared her bliss with me with such joy when this dream finally became reality. I immediately remembered the time when I took off the belt with the watermelon, never to wear it again. It turns out that most people don't need so much for happiness. One person said that to learn to rejoice in a bad situation, you need to live in very unfavorable surroundings, and then return to the bad, and it will no longer seem so terrible. But we are set on good and try to extract good from everything, extracting precious from worthless.

Someone appeared in our world who truly became the most important person and therefore could change all our plans without unnecessary words and attract all attention only to himself, not considering our interests. He could easily wake us in the middle of the night and demand mommy's breast or her caresses. He could quickly cancel all our trips with his crying and dissatisfaction. He taught us to speak in whispers and walk on tiptoe during his sleep. And if he noticed that we were doing something wrong and allowing ourselves not to monitor the dryness of his diapers, he very quickly put us in our place and achieved comfort for himself.

Our entire daily routine began to revolve around this important little person in our family, and all his small demands didn't cause us discomfort, because we loved this miracle and wanted to serve him with a pure heart.

Our daughter fit into our family life so quickly and brought new adjustments to our relationship that we now couldn't even imagine life without her, and all our conversations and prayers were only about her and about how and what to do correctly and where to get wisdom for raising a worthy person.

When I went to work and was busy solving work tasks, mentally I was with my family and constantly thought about what was happening there, what else I could do, how to live further, and

what else I could invest in my daughter. Against this background I wanted to pray a lot, which I constantly did, working with my hands. I thirsted to ask for special wisdom and light so as not to make fatal mistakes. And every evening when I came home, a surprise awaited me in the form of my spouse's stories about what happened today, what new things she learned about our daughter, how our baby behaved, and much more from the child's life.

Our love for our daughter grew along with her. In the light of this love it wasn't difficult for us to abandon our plans and change them in her favor. For us her well-being and comfort became much more important than our personal interests. And in all this we remembered our parents and began to understand their love for us and how much they had to endure to raise us to be who we are today.

Interestingly, for our parents this baby also became the most important and main person. I noticed that in their homes all our childhood photographs were very quickly replaced with pictures of the most important person. They were no longer interested in my wife and me, and all their calls contained questions and instructions about our daughter and about what we should better do for her. We listened to their advice, but sometimes we had to ask them to give us the opportunity to decide for ourselves how and what to do with the child and to make mistakes ourselves and learn from our mistakes.

Our parents often asked to take the child to themselves, but since we were breastfeeding our daughter, in addition to the granddaughter they got her mother too. My wife didn't mind parental help, as this freed up her time, and she could sleep or do other things that she somehow couldn't manage to organize.

We even noticed that our daughter interested our parents more than we ourselves, but this didn't cause jealousy or offense in us, since we perfectly understood their feelings and that the most important people should be in first place.

Sometimes it happened that, coming from work, I spent all my time with my daughter, observing her, communicating with her,

explaining to her the names and meanings of many things. Meanwhile my wife solved her questions or rested from us, not worrying at all that we had left her without attention. But when the moment came, and our daughter was awake, and we didn't pay attention to her, then she very quickly resolved this issue and reminded us who was the boss in the house. We were always happy to call her our little general who carefully monitored the order around herself.

Our daughter knew very well the time of her feeding, and if some delay occurred, she made such noise that we preferred to postpone all other matters and give her what was rightfully hers. Also, if she was given less than enough, she didn't agree with such arbitrariness and stood firmly on her position, calming down only when she received what was due. And these demands didn't embarrass us at all. Our love for this most important person was much greater than she could contain, and she understood and felt this perfectly, and sometimes reminded us of herself to receive another portion of caresses.

Each new month of life brought us new discoveries, and we impatiently waited for when our miracle would begin to walk and talk on her own. And it was very interesting to observe the awakening and development of the mind. When our daughter began to smile consciously, reacting to our faces and voice, this made us so happy that we were ready to give everything in the world for this smile. Our voices quickly calmed her, and mommy's hands and gentle words brought peace and comfort with them.

Mommy's nutrition was also immediately reflected in the child's well-being and health. Any poor-quality or acidic product immediately made itself known after breastfeeding, so my wife carefully checked and thought through everything before eating it.

At the appropriate time we began to give additional nutrition besides the breast, observing the reaction of our daughter's organism. She gladly accepted everything new and joyfully savored exotic food.

We decided to record all the bright moments from our daughter's life so that we could later tell her how much fun we had.

With the growth of the family, life expenses also increased, but this didn't embarrass us, since love for each other and for our daughter gave proper meaning to all our expenditures.

In our house it wasn't customary to talk in raised tones, so the child also grew and developed in a calm environment and was surprisingly very calm. I made it a rule to speak tenderly with my spouse in our daughter's presence, and always tell the child what a wonderful mother we have and how I love her. Although I realized that my daughter might not understand anything yet, I believed that my intonation and atmosphere of love had their positive influence on the child, and these confessions brought genuine pleasure to my wife.

When we knelt for prayer, we always took our daughter with us so that she would be present during our ritual, and when we prayed for her, we laid hands on our child and believed that the Lord hears and answers.

We don't know what our daughter would have been without our prayers, but we saw what she became through our prayers, and we always thanked God for this.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Eph.6:4; 1Tim.5:8; Prov.4:1; 6:20; 22:6; 31:26; 1Sam.12:23; Is.38:19; Ps.8:3 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Why do little children become the most important in the family?
5. Does your care for little children make them the most important for life?
6. Do you think the Lord shows His special care for us when we are born from above?
7. Is there anything wrong with parents caring for their child with reverence and adjusting their plans to his needs?
8. Will you love the one you care for a lot?

9. Does love help to joyfully bear all limitations in caring for a newborn?
10. Why doesn't any parent like it when their children cry?
11. Can a child force you to do what he needs with his crying?
12. Why do grandparents fall in love with their grandchildren so quickly and dote on them?
13. Should breastfeeding be stopped for convenience and switched to artificial nutrition?
14. What should you do if the child is crying and mommy isn't nearby?

## Parents Are Not Chosen

The Bible contains many comparative images regarding birth from above, taking examples from birth into the world. The same laws, the same influence of environment, the same principles of upbringing and much more. We all have One Heavenly Father, One Holy Spirit and One Lord Jesus, Who together participate both in the birth and formation of a person born according to the flesh for earthly life, and in birth from above for Eternal Life.

Observing only our family and seeing the action of spiritual laws in our life, a person might think that everyone lives this way, and we are ordinary parents who have an ordinary child who develops according to ordinary laws. But looking at other families, listening to stories of other parents, seeing that avalanche of evil that is directed at destroying relationships and has no restraining force, you understand that you are special and your simple life under God's protection is also special, and your child is not like all others.

God's plan includes close cooperation of man with God and God with man. We cannot do without each other, and blessed is he who understands this. If we were uninteresting and unnecessary to God, then He wouldn't have paid such a high price for our salvation from the power of sin and death. It would have been simpler for Him to erase everything sinful from the face of the Universe and create new righteous ones who would live in love and know nothing else. But where would be the guarantee that sin wouldn't repeat, and everyone would choose good?

Living many years in the church environment, visiting different communities and having relationships with fellow believers from all over the world, we noticed that although we all have one Lord, one faith, one teaching and baptism, the environment of relationships in each church is different. Somewhere you aren't noticed, even if you want to be noticed. Somewhere they are indifferent to you, somewhere you are very welcome, and somewhere you are in demand, and a queue forms of those

wanting to communicate and be friends with you, and everyone wants to invite you as a guest.

Although we also have the gift of friendliness and hospitality, due to poor health during pregnancy we had to limit ourselves in trips and receiving guests. But this was a temporary phenomenon, and all our friends related to our situation with understanding and waited for the moment when we would give birth and come to ourselves.

We also noticed very well that our cooperation with God on all family and educational questions makes our home a special place of God's presence and blessing, which everyone notices. We don't do anything special. We have modest housing and simple food. We simply love each other with a pure heart and share this model of relationships with other people, and they for some reason are drawn to us themselves and rest in soul and spirit in our society, not intending to forget us and part with us.

Parents are not chosen. We are what we are, and our child is the fruit of our love and a gift from the Lord in response to our good relationships with each other. Although any seed, falling into any soil, will sprout according to the law of the seed, in our case we took care that both the seed and the soil were processed by God's hands, and that the Lord Himself determined the time, type and character of what was sown. We simply entrusted all this to God and patiently waited for when He would decide to give us a gift and bring special experience and blessing into our life.

We have many friends who don't have children, and for some reasons they cannot have them, so we worried that we might be the same, but we continued to trust God and didn't get ahead of events, like our forefathers, Abraham and Sarah.

We also noticed that in some communities there is a desire to find new people, bring them to baptism, and then abandon them and engage in searching for others, as if the whole purpose of salvation consists in baptizing a person. And he, having become one of their own, doesn't understand what to do next, and what the meaning of his Christianity is. And he begins to seek food

and occupation for himself. The same thing exists in many families. We finally gave birth to someone, and it will grow up by itself and somehow be raised. But we know that only weeds grow by themselves, and therefore we began to approach very responsibly the appearance in the world of a new member of our family. We didn't even allow the thought that this child would be left to himself, and when he becomes an adult, then we would explain to him what we expect from him. We decided to form his character ourselves, his tastes and views on life. We took into account all our mistakes and mistakes of our parents, trying to give everything best and allow as little evil as possible into our family world.

From the first days of the birth of the new person we understood that we very much needed special patience and humility, because this little "center of the Universe" was not yet familiar with our family order and imposed his new rules on us, which deprived us of sleep and squeezed all the juice out of us. And this "juice extractor" didn't worry at all about innovations in our home. And the only thing we hoped for was that the Lord would help us settle everything, would apply His hand and give us special wisdom, which we so needed. And the Lord worked miracles, which we sometimes didn't even realize immediately. For example, when teeth were cutting or the tummy hurt and the child behaved very restlessly, and we didn't know what was happening to him and how to help, and only prayed, suddenly peace would come, and the child would fall asleep sweetly, and all ailments would go away. Although this wasn't a rule in all cases, very often we saw how something unusual happened that solved all questions in an instant, and we found ourselves in a quiet harbor, finding peace.

Although these lessons are written in strict sequence to cover all periods and features of growth, looking back at the path traveled, one can safely say that up to this point the Lord helped us and continues to lead us further.

With the birth of the child, new obligations appeared in our life, and new responsibility, and a new view of life. We became different and will never lose that experience that became ours

from within. And the way God tenderly cared for us, showing His love by the example of our relationship to our daughter, revealed to us even more the beauty of God's character and the depth of His love.

And our child as if felt that he was cared for and wished well, and at some moment of his conscious life he began to cooperate closely with us and help us in his upbringing, sometimes testing established boundaries and the constancy of our love.

Exactly the same way in any church every newborn person sees his status and how he is treated, how he is cared for and who is who. He comes from the world and doesn't want to live as before, but somewhere in the soul old habits still remain, which need to be replaced with new rules. And if he doesn't find those who will be his mentor and tutor to Christ, then the enemy of the soul will be able to use this to harm the soul and teach his concepts, which will have a pernicious influence on other members of God's family.

Any noble plant, whether it is planted in church or in family, doesn't grow by itself, but needs careful care, love and wise concern, as well as finding the source of living water itself and becoming independent in this Divine nourishment.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 1Cor.3:1-2; 4:15; 13:11-13; 14:20; Eph.4:13-15; 1Pet.2:1-2; Prov.16:3; 19:18-19; 20:18; Amos.3:3; Gal.5:14-15 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Have you seen God's hand in raising your children (if you have them)?
5. Is the parallel and similarity between newborn children and people in church clear to you?
6. Do children grow and are raised by themselves without the help of mentors?
7. Where does the Lord take greater participation: in the family or in the church, if He is called upon?

8. Can a person choose spiritual parents for himself to be born from above through them?
9. Can parents of a baby also become his spiritual parents through whom he is born from above for Eternal Life?
10. Why do different churches of the same denomination have different spirit and approach to truth?
11. Do children feel their parents' care? If so, does this affect family relationships?
12. Does it gladden you that your child is in your power, and you are for him the highest authority and representative of God?
13. What will grow out of one who isn't raised at all?
14. Do new family members change your old orders and customs? If so, with what?

## First Steps

The first child is unique in that he makes you a discoverer of the child's world. Starting from the moment of conception and then from transition from one stage of growth to another, he constantly surprises and delights you with his new achievements and changes. And you, observing him, rejoice in what happens in his body, in the development of his consciousness, in how he learns about the world and quickly adapts to any conditions of life. But the most pleasant thing in this observation is the realization that the child is a part of you and your spouse, a product of our love, which God forms before our eyes from one stage of growth to another, until this person reaches the fullness of the age of Christ.

God laid laws of time into the human body, which under normal development activate certain processes, and we see interesting changes in the life and thinking of our children.

At first our daughter lay as we placed her, but when she began to turn over independently, we understood that it became dangerous to leave her unattended, as she could roll off the bed.

When she learned to sit, it was no longer interesting for her to lie down. She tried to spend all her working time sitting on her bottom. Then she mastered the technique of movement and could independently reach desired objects and study them. She liked mom's closet most of all. She took all things out of there and could tirelessly examine and rearrange them. And when we needed to attend to our affairs so that we wouldn't be distracted, we would seat our daughter by the closet and could relax for a couple of hours, after which everything had to be carefully folded back.

When the child learned to stand independently, holding onto tall objects, then she wanted to sit less and less, and we sometimes took her hands and tried to walk with her. She swayed like in heavy rolling on a ship, but she tried with all her might and each time more confidently moved her legs and

didn't worry at all that she still couldn't do anything. We impatiently waited for when she would begin to walk independently, but we didn't hurry this event and rejoiced in each new discovery in her development. First words, first teeth, first conscious hand movements, first smile — all this brought us into such rapture that we could discuss these events for hours and gladly tell all our relatives about it.

And for our parents this child became a special blessing, as they again immersed themselves in the world of their youth and again experienced what they once experienced with us.

We decided from the very first days to teach our daughter love and constantly spoke and demonstrated to her how we love each other. And she occupied herself with her little affairs and seemed to be completely uninterested in our relationship. But we sowed this seed, believing that everything was recorded in her subconscious and that this would be very useful to her.

The Lord didn't create man with an empty heart. It will necessarily be filled with something. And if it won't be good and good seeds, then the enemy of the soul will fill this place with his plants, which will constantly make themselves known and grow quickly if no attention is paid to them.

We were explained that the first days and years of life are the most important in laying the foundation of the child's character, and therefore we always asked God for wisdom to do everything correctly.

But still we had some disagreements and disagreements on various questions. I wanted to harden our daughter through contrast baths and cold air, but my wife was against such mockery of a helpless creature and always carefully wrapped our daughter in whatever she could. And our daughter herself didn't welcome my attempts to wash her in cold water and expressed piercing protest against such rough treatment of her. But warm water was to her taste, and she could bathe for hours, splashing and enjoying this wonderful liquid.

On one fine day our child habitually stood by the sofa, holding onto the armrest, and I decided to call her to me so that she

would independently walk this difficult path. She let go of her hands and headed toward me, swaying from side to side, but staying on her feet. I encouraged her with my compliments and words of support, and she, beaming with happiness, moved in my direction. My wife also with joy and delight inspired our walker to take another step, and when our daughter reached the final goal and fell into my embrace, our house resounded with the victorious cry of our delight, and our young creation laughed more than anyone, perhaps understanding that something special had happened. We sat down in the middle of the room and began asking our daughter to go to mom, and then to dad, and she again and again took these first independent steps under our exclamations of joy and encouragement. And if she fell, our hands were ready to support her and save her from bruises.

Different children take their first steps at different times, and sometime this time comes, so one shouldn't worry if the child still can't walk by himself. This will happen sometime and will make you very happy. And this will be the most unforgettable day!

This event is also significant in that at this very moment a person becomes an independent personality and takes his first independent steps into big life. And we as parents must teach the little person many independent things, so that sometime we can release him forever into this big and dangerous world and observe how his ship will move, and how strong it will prove to be in the storms of many trials.

Any ship is built in a quiet harbor, where there are no storms and cataclysms, in order to then go out to the open sea and worthily meet all those trials for which it was designed. It is not built to remain forever at the shipyard and delight its constructors with itself and its strength, but to serve its creators and fulfill those tasks that will be placed upon it.

The Lord also prepares us, His people, for coming trials, investing all His wisdom in us, rejoicing in our first independent steps and inspiring us for subsequent movements in His work.

Our child began to grow quickly and confidently achieve all intended goals. Joy from the first steps was replaced by concern that she shouldn't break anything yet or pull something onto herself. We had to keep all our daughter's movements under constant observation and explain what was possible and what was forbidden to touch, where she could go and where she shouldn't. Although forbidden fruit is always sweet, we always asked for wisdom to give correct instructions and not form complexes or unnecessary barriers in the child's consciousness.

Choosing one or another line of upbringing, we were guided by Biblical instructions, indications of the Spirit of Prophecy and advice of wise people who had already passed this path and could predict all pernicious or good consequences of one or another model of upbringing. Although we were frightened that if we raised our daughter in strict rules, then like a hothouse plant she wouldn't be able to survive in the harsh world, in these cases we relied more on God and His recommendations than on the opinion of such experts. And as life subsequently showed, God's methods are the best.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Gen.21:8; Ruth 4:16; Heb.5:12; 1Sam.1:22-24; Ps.130:1-3; Is.11:6-9; 48:15; Jer.31:20; Matt.18:1-7 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Did you have first steps?
5. Why is it so joyful to see how a child begins to undertake something independently for the first time?
6. Should one despair if you experience a fall during first steps?
7. And is it necessary at all to start something for the first time?
8. If someone has already passed his path and learned to walk, will this experience be a blessing for me?
9. Is support from those around you needed and important when you take first steps?
10. Does a child's independence carry certain danger?

11. With which step does a thousand-kilometer journey begin?
12. Why don't all subsequent steps cause as much joy as the first steps?
13. Why must all ships be built in a quiet harbor, and not during a storm?
14. What will one learn who is always carried in arms?

## Little Children — Little Troubles

Everything grows in our garden. Only there are such "crops" called weeds, which grow by themselves, even if we didn't plant them, but they appear from somewhere, and there are so many of them. When a weed is small, then to pull it out doesn't require much effort. You slightly pull it, and it comes out of the earth entirely. Or you cut it with a hoe, and it doesn't grow anymore. But the more you don't pay attention to it, the more firmly it establishes itself in the earth, and the more difficult it becomes to get rid of it.

We saw similarity of such phenomena in our daughter's life too. We didn't teach her evil and egoism, but sometimes these qualities spontaneously manifested themselves, and we didn't understand where this came from and what to do with it. It was amusing to watch how a small being who still couldn't speak demanded attention for herself and could scream at you without any reason. But although the child was still small and didn't understand much yet, we were sometimes very concerned about such behavior. Self-will already made itself known, and the fleshly nature manifested itself where we didn't expect it.

We decided to root out such evil with good and always reacted to such actions with tenderness, trying to distract our daughter's attention with some interesting things, or did what we considered right, not looking at her whims. But there were such moments when our child's egoistic behavior alarmed us, and then we offered special prayers to God, asking Him for wisdom, strength and intervention in our difficult situation. And the Lord intervened.

Although our little daughter sometimes touched us, and we perceived her demands with a smile, the very manifestation of willful spirit from nowhere gave us to understand that the enemy of the soul hadn't died, but was already trying to sow his seeds and in time gather an abundant harvest from them. We decided to fight to the end and dedicate our daughter to God.

When our child had already learned to sit independently, we turned to our community with a request for special blessing and prayer for her. We were told what time this event would take place, and we invited all our relatives to this service, telling them that we would dedicate our daughter to God and wanted them to be witnesses of this event. For some reason they decided that we would baptize the child, so we had to explain to them that she would have to do this herself when she became much older and an independent person.

At the appointed time we gathered in the worship room, and the pastor of our community invited our family to come to the altar. He told all those present the story of how mothers brought children to Jesus, and the Lord blessed them. After this we knelt down, holding our daughter in our arms, and the minister stretched his hands over our daughter's head and pronounced words of blessing prayer.

We had seen how other children were blessed before, and now we ourselves were receiving these blessings together with our daughter. And she sat on my hands and attentively observed those around, not understanding what was happening. And we publicly dedicated our child to God and asked Him for special participation in upbringing and character formation according to the Heavenly pattern. This is what was happening! Our fellow believers were witnesses and participants of this ceremony, accepting us and our daughter into the team of victors, in order to then supplement with their participation our joy in forming a worthy personality from this little person.

Although during this dedication ceremony we didn't experience any visible miracle, we believed that something extremely important happened in Heaven, and henceforth our little family member is under special Divine care. Although she still has to choose for herself whom to serve soon, but being under God's influence, it will be easier to do this.

When my wife and I planned something, we didn't particularly ask our daughter how she saw our plans. We simply took her, and she had no other choice. But when the time came, and we began to give her additional food, she gradually began to

understand taste and didn't want to eat some things, even if we asked her to try. If we managed to put what she didn't like in her mouth, she immediately spat it back out and didn't want to taste it anymore. But we decided not to worry about food, and if our daughter refused what she didn't like, we didn't replace it with anything for her, so as not to develop in her the understanding that this way one can get something more delicious.

Independent movement on her own feet brought additional safety measures to our home. Our daughter actively studied the new world and grabbed everything that was accessible to her, opened everything that could be opened, pulled everything that lay poorly, and put all small objects in her mouth. We had to devise all kinds of inventions to limit the child's access to the contents of closets and drawers. But we didn't scold her for this, and tried to remove from the accessibility zone what could break or cause harm or danger to life. We bought special plugs for all outlets, and the kitchen stove had to be turned off when we weren't using it.

At some point in our growth we gave our daughter a spoon and showed her how she could eat porridge herself. This transition is very important for the child, as it activates certain processes in consciousness that transfer mental development to a new level. As a result, everyone and everything within a two-meter radius was covered in porridge, but not so much got into her mouth. But we were prepared for this lesson and after eating cleaned everything up, and changed our eater into clean clothes. Our daughter liked the process itself and the next time she already wanted to eat by herself, refusing to accept anything from our hands. This sometimes created certain inconveniences, especially when we were in a hurry somewhere. But we found a way out of this situation, giving our daughter spoons in both her hands and at the same time feeding from another. Over time each meal became cleaner, and we habitually put on our daughter's plate what we ate ourselves.

Our general prayer to God was so customary that when we stood up for prayer, our daughter immediately folded her hands together and waited for when she could say: "Amen." At first these were sounds remotely similar to this word, but expressing her agreement. Subsequently, when she had already begun to speak, with her questions about prayer she disconcerted many people by asking why they didn't pray, or what they prayed about today. In one word, prayer life for our child was such a natural routine of the day that she waited for and rejoiced when we would conduct this ritual, and then take each other's hands and wish each other abundant blessings for the whole day. With her directness she trained all our unbelieving relatives to pray before meals and didn't give them chances to avoid this procedure, naturally folding her hands for quiet prayer of gratitude for daily bread.

We were always amazed by our daughter's ability to constantly find occupation for herself, see joy in any matter and achieve what she needed, and mommy's enthusiasm helped the child choose the right direction and quickly switch from her goals to mommy's.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Col.3:21; Rom.12:21; Eph.4:29-32; 5:8-11; 6:4; 1Thess.5:21-22; Prov.25:5; Gal.6:1; Phil.4:4-9; 1Tim.6:11 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Is the saying true: "Little children — little troubles"?
5. Should one fight evil in a child's character in early years?
6. How do you understand "overcome evil with good"? Rom.12:21.
7. Should something be forbidden to a little child? After all, he still doesn't understand anything and is so small.
8. And do little children bring little joys? Or are these joys very big?
9. What should you do if you don't know what to do with a capricious child, and he knows what to do with you?

10. Have you noticed that children understand very well whom they're dealing with, and what you represent?
11. At what age should boundaries be set for children? And are these boundaries needed at all?
12. Are you interested that the place where a child was born and grows is for him the best place to live, even if it's one room in a communal apartment for 10 people?
13. Do you know little children who would constantly complain to you about poor living conditions?
14. Should one look for a nanny for the child if you can't handle him yourself?

## To Forbid or to Guide?

Once I heard a story that in Japanese culture they don't say the word "no" directly. This surprised me. I tried to imagine my life without this word and couldn't. Direct refusal of certain things and relationships has so permeated my consciousness that I can pronounce this word without thinking. Once a girl from Japan began attending our church, and after some time she decided to join our brotherhood and share our faith and teaching with us. In conversation with her I decided to clarify whether it's really true that in Japan it's not customary to give a negative answer. She confirmed that this was so, and that people find many other expressions to make you understand their denial of something. I noticed that this sister also never says the word "no," but finds many other expressions with similar meaning. It would seem, what's the difference, but sometimes direct refusal or disagreement can very strongly damage relationships and wound the heart.

Seeing how our daughter grows quickly, begins to understand more and more and very often shows self-will, we thought about how to learn to manage her desires without creating complexes and fears in her. We understood that this little person is learning the world of tastes, sounds, smells and touch. She's interested in touching, trying and breaking everything. She wants to climb everywhere and participate in everything. And she does this not out of mischief, but because this program of learning the world is laid into her. She can listen to the same story several times a day for days on end, and then ask us to tell it again. She has more energy in one little finger than in my entire body, and she's capable of being in motion all the time she's awake. And we decided not to diminish this energy, but to direct it in the right direction.

Understanding the child's need to learn about everything and desire to participate in everything, we chose for our daughter those activities that we considered necessary and developing. There's no television in our house, and we weren't planning to have one. It wasn't in our plans to allow Satan to teach our

daughter about life in this world, so we asked all our relatives, whom we visited, not to turn on the TV in the child's presence. We also decided not to give our daughter a phone and to use it ourselves so as not to teach the child that there's something more important there than she is.

Offering our little family member some next activity or entertainment, we tried to explain its benefit, the rules of the game and our joy if our daughter would join us too. She gladly supported our initiative and very quickly changed all her plans in response to our assurances.

We saw that sometimes our child showed some anger or irritation regarding certain problems, and understood that she couldn't yet distinguish good from evil, and therefore tried to explain to her how to react correctly in this or that situation, and why it's not worth getting angry or scolding about something.

When she chose an activity that we didn't like or that could create a safety threat, we didn't forbid her to do it, but tried to switch her interest to other things and offer her an alternative in another sphere of activity.

When I came home from work, and my wife told me about all her problems and conflicts with our daughter, I didn't want to be a gendarme with a club and engage in solving problems through punishment, especially since our daughter always met me with joy and ran into my arms to hug me with her arms and legs. When my wife had days of struggle, she would sigh with relief, making it clear that she needed a short rest and reboot, and when she was the victor, she gladly shared her successes on the children's front and where she managed to establish the banner of love and win new territory.

Our daughter perfectly understood that we loved her and wished her happiness and well-being in everything, so she willingly cooperated with us in her upbringing, and when we presented claims to her on some questions, she, seeing their justice and our love, accepted reproofs and tried to behave differently.

Knowing how many kitchen appliances could be dangerous for our daughter's health, we always removed them from her reach and explained to her that it would hurt or be hot if she touched or used this. But it was unclear to her what this meant. But one day I turned on the burner on the stove and decided to heat water. My daughter was fussing nearby, and when I moved the hot kettle aside, she decided to check the surface of the working stove for interesting objects and put her palm right on the hot stove, wanting to find a free object. This happened so quickly that I didn't have time to react and protect our daughter from the burn. The body's reaction to a very hot object was piercingly loud. I immediately grabbed our daughter's hand, but it was already too late. My wife ran into the kitchen in fear and immediately understood everything. And our daughter cried loudly, lamenting: "Ow," and couldn't be comforted. We didn't know what to do in case of a burn and began pouring cold water on her hand. But our daughter cried loudly and wasn't going to calm down even in her mother's arms. A doctor lived across from our house, and we decided to turn to him for help. He was at home, quickly understood the essence of the problem and gave us burn ointment that caused anesthesia. Our daughter felt better and began to calm down. After this incident our little "world explorer" avoided the stove by a meter, and when we said "hot" about something, she immediately lost interest in this thing, understanding what awaited her in case of disobedience. Pain quickly teaches good manners, but it wasn't in our plans to cause pain to the child for success in upbringing. However, the Lord allowed situations when pain proved our rightness. But this was rather an exception than a rule.

We decided to always overcome evil with good. And when we saw that our child was doing something wrong, we immediately thought up a more useful activity and directed all our daughter's interest and enthusiasm in the right direction, convincing and explaining to her that there were more fascinating activities that she would really like.

There were also such moments when our daughter absolutely didn't want to do what we offered her, and began to cry loudly

when we didn't give her the opportunity to carry out her plans. Then we had to take her in our arms and tell her how beautiful the surrounding world was, what interesting cars were around us, how green color differed from white and think up much else to distract her attention from the unnecessary and interest her in the useful, while praying to ourselves for God's help. Although sometimes it was very difficult to solve such questions quickly, persistence and love did their work, and the child gave up and calmed down.

We understood that if we didn't plant and cultivate good morals and useful habits in our daughter's heart, the enemy of the soul would quickly sow this place with his seeds, which we very much didn't want, and therefore we tried to do everything possible on our part to neutralize the action of evil.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Rom.12:10,21; Ps.33:12-17; 77:3-8; Gal.4:1-3; Col.3:20-21; Prov.8:32-36; 31:28; Eph.4:29; James.1:19; Is.8:18; Luke.1:80 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Why are prohibitions and restrictions not the best method of upbringing?
5. What is more difficult, simply forbidding something to a child or offering him something else and interesting him in it?
6. How does the Lord teach us obedience? Through prohibitions or through various types of service?
7. Should one force a child's will if he doesn't want something?
8. Is it necessary to learn to overcome evil with good?
9. Do you think the reality of convincing a child differs from what we study here?
10. Why is it always easier to authoritatively forbid something without giving an alternative than to occupy a child's mind with something useful?
11. What should I do if I see a child's activity as dangerous for the soul, but don't know what to offer as an alternative?

12. Should I bear responsibility for the correct occupation of other people's children who come to visit me with their problems?
13. Do children like those who engage them in interesting and useful activities?
14. Should children be explained what is good and what is bad, directing their steps on the paths of truth?

## A Friend's Advice

Once our friend asked to visit us, having warned us in advance that he wanted to tell us something important and useful about raising children. We understood that my wife and I were about to hear something interesting, and perhaps unpleasant, and therefore began praying about this meeting, asking God to reveal truth to us and speak through this person.

Coming to our home, he immediately suggested we pray and in prayer asked that the Holy Spirit would guide the course of our conversation and speak through him only what would be important and relevant for us. We gave our agreement in our response to prayer and, taking our notebooks, began to listen attentively.

Our visitor began by reminding us that our world is a very dangerous territory where a gang of spirits of wickedness in heavenly places operate, who plan to steal, kill and destroy our child, and we shouldn't relax and be touched, noticing how the little being sins and shows fleshly nature, attributing everything to her young age. We already understood this and very carefully watched our daughter's behavior, discussing all her antics between ourselves, but an extra reminder about the danger surrounding us once again invigorated us, and my wife and I became very attentive, giving each other to understand that the time had come for special prayers.

We began to write down all subsequent advice and recommendations and decided to later pray about each point separately, and here we wanted to share with you some of the advice we heard from our friend.

1. Do everything possible so that your child gets to Eternity together with you. Eternity is worth fighting for and ending up in.
2. Always remember that you're not alone in your struggle for your family's happiness, that the entire Heavenly host led by the Godhead is always ready to protect, educate and lead you through life, cooperating with you in all questions of

upbringing when you call upon this host in prayer and entrust yourselves to the care of Heavenly Forces.

3. Do everything possible to bring your daughter not to church, but to Jesus, and teach her to have her personal relationship with the Savior, loving Him with all her soul, heart and understanding. And let Jesus Himself with your help give her to understand at the right time where His church is and what's needed to become its member.
4. The enemy of the soul hasn't died and walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and he must be resisted with firm faith, keeping faithfulness to God's principles.
5. In the state where we live, our children don't belong to parents but are property of the state, and it can take our child at any moment and accuse us of violating children's rights that no one knows.
6. In punishing your daughter you should show special wisdom and love so that the child understands why he's being punished and sees the logic of this consequence.
7. Never punish your children in the presence of strangers or other children. Let this process always be hidden from curious eyes and be your family secret that even children shouldn't tell anyone.
8. Physical punishment is an extreme and undesirable measure of stopping crime and should be done with the child's agreement, who understood why he's being punished. It shouldn't cause trauma or moral humiliation to the child from you being stronger.
9. Don't enter into open conflict with authorities or the education system for the right to raise your child as you see fit if you see inadequacy on their part. But teach the child to wisely resist all evil and have personal attitudes regarding good.
10. You are a personal example of behavior, any reform and obedience for your children. They will subconsciously copy you and live as you live.
11. When forbidding something to children, always explain to them the reason for the prohibition, which should be based

on your love for them. Also offer better choice, adding your enthusiasm to this.

12. Be consistent in your rules and orders and don't violate them yourselves. Children are very attentive and won't give you chances for justification if you yourselves don't observe what you forbid them.
13. It's 10 times more difficult and dangerous to raise a child in the city than in the countryside. Therefore do everything possible to leave big cities.
14. As long as possible, keep the child with you, not giving him to educational or upbringing institutions. Home should become his main school and center of influence.
15. Do everything possible so your children don't study in worldly schools where they'll become easy prey for the enemy and learn the depths of satanic deceptions.
16. For personal comfort or rest don't accustom children to playing computer and phone games or watching worldly TV programs. For minutes of today's peace you'll have to pay with years of anxiety in the future.
17. Learn now to tell children about God, about His love and law, and then in the future you won't have to tell God about your children.
18. When you see that your human strength and patience aren't enough to restrain yourself, then ask God for help, and He will give you wisdom how to act.
19. Remember that the church is a hospital where different people can be, and it's worth understanding into whose hands you're entrusting your child, and what influence is exerted on your child during children's lessons or programs.
20. When choosing friends for your children, have close communication with their parents too, exchanging experiences of your upbringing and understanding what influence they have on their and your children.
21. Your child is your most basic missionary field that you cannot leave with impunity and engage in something more useful, in your opinion.
22. Listen to advice from people who have wonderful children, and also learn from mistakes of those whose children went into the world and don't want to hear anything about God.

23. Love each other so that your children know and see this. Speak about your love for each other in the children's presence.
24. Never shout at a child or beat him in the presence of other people. They may complain to appropriate authorities that you cruelly treat children, and they'll take them from you forever.
25. Never scold children for their honesty and sincerity, even if they confess very bad things to you. Then they won't deceive you and will tell you everything that happens to them.
26. Show your children that God is the Most Important in your life. Then they'll have the opportunity to make Him the head of their life too.
27. Never sort out your relationships in the children's presence so they're never witnesses to your bad words and indignation.
28. Although upbringing principles are the same for everyone, each child is unique in his perception and needs such a unique approach to him considering his peculiarities.
29. In the most difficult and hopeless situations only prayer until answer will help. Don't stop praying for your disobedient children.
30. Don't be afraid to be strict, but don't stop loving your children.
31. Children feel your unconditional love well and expect it from you.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Deut.6:4-9; Prov.22:6; 27:9; Ps.72:24; Heb.13:5; Matt.6:33; 1Pet.5:7-10; Eph.5:25; 6:4,11-13; Deut.12:28 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What other advice not described in this lesson came to your heart that you would like to share?
5. Should one listen to others' advice on raising children or is it better to have one's own experience?
6. Why is it more interesting to learn from others' mistakes than from one's own?

7. Can wise advice change something in your approach to raising children?
8. What should you do if I'm advised to do what I already know?
9. Why do people love to give advice?
10. How to distinguish useful and wise advice from others?
11. Which of the listed advice sounds to you for the first time?
12. What advice on raising children does the Bible give?
13. What should you do if I can't stand others' advice, but don't know how to raise a child?
14. Does each generation have its specificity in raising children?

## Personality Formation

It's accepted that the age of children who grow and are raised in love and fear of God is divided into several stages that smoothly transition from one to another. Until five years old parents serve the child, from five to ten years the child serves the parents, from ten to thirteen parents befriend their children, and from thirteen and beyond parents love their teenagers and cooperate with them.

Until five to seven years the main formation of the mind occurs, and during this period the child can behave unpredictably. While he's very small, he expresses all his desires through crying, weeping, grunting, and they even say: "Whatever the child amuses himself with, as long as he doesn't cry."

When the baby realizes that he touches and begins to touch different objects, then synchronization of the right and left hemispheres occurs in his brain, which are responsible for left and right limbs separately.

When parents show different objects and call them by their names, explain all their actions aloud, then visual and auditory perception creates an image of what's being discussed. Memorization of everything occurs.

The usual family vocabulary contains a certain set of words that are used in different situations, and it's easy for the young mind to perceive familiar words and compose logical chains in various expressions. We teach our baby speech starting from his birth, and very complex processes of analysis and visualization occur in his mind, which form logic, analytical thinking and reason. And when the child begins to speak, we're amazed by his vocabulary and ability to correctly and competently express his thoughts and desires. But we invested all this into him with our daily conversations with him and in his presence.

It's also accepted that the main formation of reason begins to form from the moment when the child tries to talk and exchange verbal information with those around. This is what

distinguishes man from animals, that he has logical and reasonable speech and can control and plan his will expression.

The child's ability to walk makes him mobile and independent, and parents' obligation includes the duty to direct little steps in the right direction. Children cannot distinguish good from evil themselves and therefore can very quickly lose their temper and arrange "concerts," which isn't always pleasant for parents to experience. Children's whims, spontaneous cries and tears, laughter and exclamations of joy tell us that the mind of babies is still forming, and they need patience from their parents and understanding that not everything is so bad, and this will pass when the process of mind development transitions to the stage of responsibility.

Parental instruction and upbringing principles teach the child rules of life and establish certain boundaries in his worldview. God's Word defines good and evil and establishes good morals on a firm foundation. Therefore those children who are read the Bible from childhood and have principles of God's law and various rules of behavior explained to them are more inclined to conscious obedience and trust in God.

Baby Jesus went through the entire life path and all stages of growth and formation of personality and mind, and He knows what children experience in this or that situation, and how to help them in this or that question. Therefore, when parents cooperate with Christ in raising children, the Lord applies His spiritual conviction too, which helps children accept wise advice and instructions much faster and more correctly than happens without Him.

Until a certain age parents are representatives of God for children and have absolute authority with their household members. And if you ask a small child about his confidence in this or that truth, he will boldly tell you that his father or mother say so, and since they say so, then it's so.

Unbelief originates where there's no agreement between parents, and their behavior is inconsistent, when they teach one

thing today and the opposite tomorrow, when they themselves don't live as they require from others.

Children notice all details and inconsistencies in upbringing and begin to get confused in this and compose their own paths and boundaries, which will differ from their parents' paths. By the child, by his behavior and thinking one can understand who his parents are, and who he'll become when he grows up. "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right" Prov. 20:11.

Love between father and mother will necessarily be reflected in their children too. We simply cannot, loving each other with my wife, somehow relate differently to our little daughter.

Strictness in upbringing doesn't speak of absence of love, but on the contrary gives love the correct form of relationships and certain boundaries, within which children feel their safety and can do everything they want. Love forms patience in the character of father and mother, and when necessary, long-suffering.

When I have a relationship with Christ and, following His advice, buy from Him gold refined by fire from Rev. 3:18, then this blessing of faith and love is given to me so that I can share it with all members of my family. And this source will never dry up, and my juices will remain with me when little "juice extractors" engage in their usual business of exhausting nerves. Love from above will help me wisely react to all attacks from outside and act according to establishing and affirming God's standards in my family.

Our children were created by Love for love, and when they receive what they were born for, they see the correct meaning of their life and don't worry about all kinds of trifles, maintaining confidence in various vicissitudes. Unconditional love of father and mother is a firm foundation for their children during various trials, and faith in God helps them make correct decisions according to the light received.

The main foundation in forming the child's personality is laid before seven years, and therefore it's very important that

parents keep little children with themselves as much and as long as possible, not allowing the world to teach them other values and build their life according to other principles. One shouldn't fear that away from the world your children will become unsuitable for life among people and will be easily vulnerable to Satan's attacks. Having a firm foundation of faith and love, they'll be able to worthily meet and endure any trial, and God will grant them such wisdom that they'll master any sciences and knowledge faster than their peers and see everything in the right light.

It's natural for parents to get tired, make mistakes and lose patience. But knowledge of who their children are for God, what God expects from parents and how He cooperates with them will help not to give up and not lose heart, but day after day mold from soft clay what will then gladden them throughout all subsequent life. And love from above will apply its hand and decorate your relationships as nothing else can do. What we mold, we'll receive, and the fire of trials will affirm and strengthen all our and God's principles in our children's lives, and it won't be difficult for them to share what they consist of and who they are. Everything is in our hands and in our power until a certain age and time.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Matt.18:3; Eph. 6:1; 1Pet.1:14; Prov. 20:7,11; Gen.33:12-14; Jer.22:20; Ps.126:3-5; 138:13-18; Is. 8:18; 1Cor.7:14 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Have you ever thought that all children in all countries develop identically and consistently?
5. Is it necessary to ask God for love for one's children whom you love anyway?
6. Where do children get such ability to squeeze all juices from parents while remaining spontaneous and active?
7. Why do parents have the greatest authority in the child's eyes?

8. What happens in the child's mind if his parents teach one thing but live differently?
9. How does parental love for children appear and express itself?
10. Do you think it's easy in a family to love capricious children if there's love between their parents?
11. Will it be right to keep a child away from secular educational and upbringing institutions as long as possible?
12. Why does the Lord compare us with clay? Is.64:8.
13. Are our children clay in our hands?
14. Why are our children so similar to us?

## Mom

Each of us has or had a mom who carried us under her heart and gave us life. When I hear this word, I immediately remember my parents, but my wife also became a mom, received this lifelong status and now clearly reveals to me what my parents faced, how much love and care they showed to me, and how much they gave to their children, guided by love.

In our world it's not customary to thank parents, although they all wait for when their children will at least appreciate something and somehow show their gratitude. But our gratitude is already manifested in our children, whom the Lord gave us, and who aren't going to thank us for the good we do to them.

Why did the Lord choose specifically woman to become the mother of His children who will appear in the world as the fruit of their parents' love? It's difficult to say, but this was God's plan and design at creation. In this union the Creator wanted to clearly reveal to the entire Universe something greater than relationships between people. He managed to lift the veil of Divine relationships. When the Lord creates someone in His image and likeness, He lays into this creation such incomprehensible depth for study that an inquisitive mind can make constant discoveries throughout all Eternity.

Unfortunately, sin and the fallen state of the world reduced the role of mother to conveyor production and hid her in a distant dusty corner, not attaching special significance to birth. But all Divine Forces are involved in this process, preparation is underway for the appearance in the world of a new soul, for whom the precious blood of our Savior was shed. According to God's plan every person is born to live eternally and never die, and the mother becomes the first teacher, mentor, nourisher of this little creation.

Visiting camp meetings, I love to observe mothers, especially those who have babies. They so want to engage in their favorite activity, rest from everything, participate in public life, listen to

useful seminars, but they're tied to their children by invisible threads, and all their attention and all their hearing, and they themselves are there where their sons and daughters are. And even if the child is under the supervision of other people and in good hands, mom's heart is always in that place, ready to come, comfort, instruct and give all of herself if circumstances require it. And all mothers without exception behave this way.

A mother's work is performed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, without weekends and vacations. And how can such an intense schedule be evaluated? But the most interesting thing is that many girls and women dream of this job on legal grounds. Already from childhood it's interesting for them to play with dolls, care for them and show maternal attention to their toys. This is already laid into woman, and this cannot be taken away.

A believing mother is a special blessing for children and for her husband. She closely cooperates with the One who gave her such an inheritance and gives her patience and wisdom to raise worthy people not only for this world, but also for the Eternal Kingdom. How can the work of a believing woman be evaluated, who devotes all of herself to serving children, to teach them to love each other and fear God?

Mom is not only the woman who gave birth to her child, but she can also become one who decided to adopt or take under guardianship, at her expense, those whom no one else cares about. And it happens that responsibility for another's soul is much greater than for one's own native children.

Mom is the person who is always nearby and will always come to help in a difficult moment, leaving all her important affairs, because she cannot live and think differently. Although at some moment she has to let her children go so they become independent, they don't stop being children, and her heart is always with them.

What is mom in God's eyes? She is the direct representative of God for her children. It's through her that the outpouring of God's love and care occurs into the life of these little creations. Through touches, tenderness and affectionate speech she gives

her children the meaning of life, assuring them that love exists and there's much of it with God. It's she who becomes the first teacher in the School of God's Love. It's she who clearly shows her household members how the Lord loves them. But the Bible teaches us that God's love is higher than maternal love, so we have somewhere to grow. We read Is. 49:15-16: "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me." But however great the Lord is in His love for His children, this in no way makes mother's love something of little significance. It's God who made mother who she is, and laid into her the gift of motherhood, which remains with her forever.

Although sin damaged the mind of some women who refuse their children or live for themselves, allowing their babies to somehow grow up, this exception cannot be a criterion for all mothers.

God gave us His commandment to honor father and mother and through this command taught us to arrange correct life priorities, always remembering thanks to whom we appeared in this world. And in old age this honoring should grow into care for people who cared for you all their lives.

Mom is a wise friend who will always gladly share everything she has and give more than needed. I'm always amazed by a mother's ability to feel her children's mood and guess about everything that happens in their hearts. They can even feel and see their children's sins when no one else knows about it.

But the most interesting thing is that with her influence and wisdom mother makes from her child such a person as he will have to live his entire subsequent life. With her instructions, care and love she forms his way of thinking, his character and determines his spiritual values.

Many people, getting to Eternity, will understand that they ended up there not by chance, but thanks to the persistent work, constant prayers and unchanging care of their mothers.

When the church calls for public prayers, the first thing all women pray about is their children, if such exist, and only then all other prayer needs are voiced. A mother simply cannot think otherwise, children are her priority.

If you ask any person to draw tenderness, everyone will draw a mom with a baby in her arms. But the Lord also promised to carry us in His arms and care for us until old age (Is.46:3-4), but He doesn't diminish the mother's role in the life and influence on her children, but gives her strength, patience and wisdom for all time.

It's worth noting that if your wife is a mother, then it's necessary to support her authority as a mother in her children's eyes and love her with all your soul, giving by this relationship to your children an example of how to relate to mom. And children will simply have nothing left but to imitate you in this love and do the same, constantly gladdening their dear mommy's heart.

Mom is a gift from God that we don't choose.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 1Kings.2:19; Eph.6:1-2; Ex.20:12; 21:15,17; Gen.3:20; Prov.15:20; 20:20; 28:24; Matt.15:4-6; Luke.1:42-45 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Who is mom?
5. What does it mean to honor father and mother?
6. Who is the closest person for newlyweds?
7. For what period does mom become mom, and when does her mission as mom end?
8. How many moms can there be in a person's life?
9. How does mom differ from dad?
10. What is the mother's mission before God?
11. Why are not all mothers such and cripple their children's lives?
12. Who is our Heavenly mother?
13. Why shouldn't one deify Jesus's mother and worship her?

14. Is being a mom an honorable duty in Heaven's eyes or something ordinary that shouldn't be paid attention to?

## Constancy

It is written: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" Heb.13:8. Constancy is one of the most reliable traits of God's character. Thanks to this principle we can build solid relationships with our Creator, count on certain behavior from His side, ask for something and believe in receiving. The Lord knows what we need, and constantly engages in providing all His creation with the most necessary, wanting unceasingly to give something greater and better.

The immutability of God's law protects us from confusion and unpredictability. Imagine what would happen if God's commandments periodically changed based on the Creator's mood? Such chaos would ensue that it's even difficult to imagine. But it's precisely the constancy of these principles and their immutability, despite time, that protects us from the power of sin and helps build relationships with God. And in relationships with us the Lord is unchanging in His unconditional love and desire to serve. He wants us to believe this, come to Him in our need and cleave to Him on a permanent basis. Although it's sad for Him to look at all our bustle and running in a hamster wheel, He respects what we choose and always offers us something more valuable and better — all of Himself and all of Heaven.

Knowing about God's constancy, I have in my consciousness a certain understanding that in this world there's something unchanging on which something solid can be built. And this solid thing won't disappear when I want to get it again.

Based on God's constancy, we discover and have all kinds of scientific laws and rules that never change. If, for example, we take mathematics, chemistry or physics, these are such precise sciences that it's even difficult to imagine some other rules and formulas. And they're unchanging in their constancy. And no mistake will become a law or rule, because there's no place for it in these sciences.

If we turn to history and politics, there's complete confusion. Winners write history as it's profitable for them, and politicians tell lies, and you don't know what to believe.

People who have certain constancy in themselves and live according to certain principles are considered reliable, and one can rely on them for something. Although we know that human nature is changeable, we still very much value reliable people, especially if these are our relatives or friends. With them one can organize something and plan something, knowing that they won't let you down.

A person with certain principles is considered a reliable partner with whom one can have predictable relationships, and this allows achievement of set goals and solving of certain tasks.

Looking into my heart and evaluating my life principles, I can see what I represent and honestly admit to myself how constant or reliable I am in this or that sphere of my life activity. It won't be difficult for me to see where I'm constant and where I'm stormy and don't have solid foundation. I'm inclined to have certain habits that fill my life with automatism when I don't particularly reflect. But there are such things that I plan. I make a decision to perform certain actions because it's necessary and correct. This concerns all spiritual values and everything that strengthens my health and brings happiness.

Love is the most solid foundation and the firmest principle, but I always stand before the choice to love or not when I meet various trials. Even when love became part of me and I live and think by it, my fleshly nature, which doesn't die, still strives to suggest another path and another solution to many questions.

Constant choice of God's path and life with God is struggle with the influence of evil and unceasing resistance to all kinds of temptations and trials. As long as I live in this world with God, I always need to swim against the current of this world and apply constant efforts to resist the mighty streams of evil. One need only stop this struggle for a moment and let go of the oars, and evil will invariably capture and whirl my boat and carry me to the waterfall of destruction to throw me onto the rocks of

despair and disappointment and deprive me of connection with God.

I cannot pray much or long because I don't always understand how correctly and where to find time for this. But I can do this constantly. I would very much like to leave everything and pray from morning to evening, but there are certain affairs and duties from which no one releases me. And even if I take vacation from everything and still achieve my dream, most likely this will be a one-time experience of unceasing prayer, and then I'll have to return to ordinary life and do much of what only I can do. But my constancy in prayer teaches me to allocate certain hours in my schedule to communicate with God, and also to invite Him into all my plans, tasks and daily affairs. I invite God to be present at any of my communication with other people.

Such a prayer spirit develops in me the habit of being in constant connection with Heaven and dedicating all my plans to God.

If you dump the waters of the world ocean on a stone and quickly pour out all these streams, nothing will happen to the stone. It will stand firmly, not changing its form. But if you place this stone so that water constantly drips on it, then over time a hollow will form at this place, which will then deepen. There's even a saying that water wears away stone. This means the constancy of the water flow.

What do we call those who promise something and don't do it? Who give hope and then change their mind? Who say one thing and do another? We mark such people for ourselves as empty talkers. We don't want to trust them.

In any learning there's a principle of gaining knowledge, which consists of small lessons on a constant basis with increasing load and complexity of material.

Let's take any successful athlete as an example. He became successful not because he quickly overcame all loads and trained his muscles from morning to night, but thanks to constancy of training with gradual increase of load. No science

is mastered at once. My one-time decision or action can change something in life, but won't make me different. However, constancy in making the same decisions and performing deeds will form certain skills and habits in me and teach me much.

Study on a constant basis makes me a specialist in the sphere I'm studying. And unceasing practice of acquired knowledge makes me a professional in this area.

We read in Col 4:2: "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving." In prayer I announce to the spiritual world about my dedication of myself and my life to God. I ask the Lord for much. Knowledge of God's promises urges me to remind Him of what's promised and give what is rightfully mine. Constancy in such relationships makes me that channel and conductor of God's blessings that the Lord will actively use for His purposes and plans. Jesus also wants to see in me something solid and constant, though human, to unceasingly use me as His instrument. And my constancy in many questions contributes to the steady movement of God's work forward and toward victory.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Ps.17:3; 1Sam.2:2; Col.4:2; 1Pet.1:22; Rom.2:6-7; 12:12; 13:6; Eph.6:18; 1Tim.4:16; Acts.6:3-4; Mark.4:16-17; Luke.9:62 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What is constancy?
5. Why did the Lord choose stability and constancy for Himself?
6. What in our world is inconstant?
7. Do you like to deal with reliable people? How do they differ from unreliable ones?
8. Is it important for us to have constancy in spiritual questions?
9. What is fraught with flirting with the world and fascination with various winds of doctrines?
10. Does constancy in something bring blessing to life?

11. What will happen if I decide to master some spiritual science by external study, in a short time with maximum load?
12. How is constancy manifested in love? Is such a thing possible?
13. Is there constancy in your relationships?
14. How does worldly constancy differ from spiritual? What is their similarity?

## Constancy in the Family

Constancy is the ability to preserve for a prolonged time some peculiarities or traits of one's character. It also includes immutability of behavior, interpersonal relationships, legal and spiritual norms and much of what a person comes into contact with.

A child who is born into the world somehow amazingly already knows what he needs, what is useful, what he is entitled to by status and where to move in his development. Loving parents, even if they're inexperienced, very quickly determine the laws of personality development laid into human nature and adjust to them. But those father and mother who possess knowledge and can manage the situation, making from their child exactly what they want to see, have much more advantages and achieve certain success in forming their child's personality.

Constancy, stability, consistency, faithfulness to principles — all this creates a solid foundation for building happy family relationships within one's household.

God granted us unchanging testimonies of His constancy, which don't spoil our life but give firm confidence that it will always be so. The sun rises and sets at the appointed time, seasons consistently follow one another, the water cycle in nature feeds the earth and plant world, the air we breathe contains a certain concentration of gases, and the week has seven days. This and any other stability and constancy don't spoil our life but contribute to our calm development and confidence in tomorrow.

Laws of body and personality development are laid by God into the heart and nature of the child, which can adapt to certain living conditions, but at the same time strive for harmony of relationships that can exist in an atmosphere of mutual love, freedom and respect. For young parents who have no idea about the needs and requirements of the baby, their son or daughter becomes another toy that can quickly become boring

and begin to periodically irritate with their protests against impermissible arbitrariness.

Man is born for love, and when he receives it, it's not difficult for him to transmit it further and share it with those who need it.

Studying psychology and the structure of children's thinking, we identified certain patterns of intellectual development and what we should do to raise a full-fledged personality. Besides love, a child needs cleanliness, proper nutrition, a stable daily routine, understanding of his rights and duties, firm boundaries and frameworks within which he will be protected and can do what he wants, a personal example from his parents and their consistency regarding their own rules.

Children are very observant, and my spouse's and my relationship is for them a visual demonstration of practical application of those laws we offer to the little citizens of our home. We don't bear responsibility for raising other people's children, but are very sensitive to our child's behavior.

When my wife is alone with our daughter, then throughout the whole day she can see and discover peculiarities of our daughter's behavior and then tell me, so we could understand how to best give example and influence her.

When our girl was very small, she ate little and slept very much. But the older she became, the faster the period of her wakefulness increased and sleep time shortened. And if at first she lay quietly and looked at the world around her, then she wanted to touch and taste everything. And when she began to walk, she became interested in the structure of everything in our house.

We introduced a daily routine for the child and tried to stick to this schedule, not paying attention to whims and our daughter's unwillingness to follow these rules. As a result, she got used to the fact that when there was a call to eating, bathing or sleeping, she needed to leave everything and engage in what we announced. If during breastfeeding the child herself reminded us that mealtime had come, then when she began to

eat independently, we had to insist that all her little affairs be postponed and she sit in her chair for eating. Even on tourist trips we tried to observe the daily routine and give food on time. The exception could only be visits to guests, but even here we explained to our daughter that we would be fed when it's customary in this house.

I decided for myself not to bring my work and everyday problems into the house, but always enter with good mood and rejoice in another meeting with my household. And if some unpleasantness happened at work, I tried to remove it from my heart and give it to Jesus before I crossed the threshold of my home. As a result, my household knew that when dad comes, then love, joy and blessing of his presence come with him. Constancy in such an approach made each of my homecomings a holiday, and when I managed to come earlier, this caused special joy. And this pulled me to return to my household more quickly and taste their joyful experiences, giving all of myself to them. I tried to come from work at the same time, and when I was delayed, I would call my wife and explain the reason for the delay, and she would inform our daughter that dad would come later because work issues needed to be resolved.

My spouse and I also developed certain rules of behavior and relationships in our house and monitored that our daughter strictly observed them. The word of father or mother was law for everyone, and we monitored what we said or required, and were unyielding to our daughter's desire to break our rules to indulge her egoism.

I noticed that a child very quickly assimilates rules of behavior and carefully monitors that we also observe them. For example, we taught our daughter during walks to walk only on the sidewalk and not go out onto the roadway. She quickly learned this and raised a cry of indignation when she saw that I was breaking this rule and walking on the road where cars drive, even if nothing threatened me. I immediately apologized for my violation and moved to the pedestrian zone.

If we introduced some prohibition, this was a prohibition forever and if possible for everyone.

In spiritual development we had time for prayer and reading, which we allocated every evening, and on weekends we gathered in the mornings too. On working days my wife often had to conduct morning inspirations with our daughter without me, since I usually left before the child woke up. And while I worked, my wife and daughter learned another God's promise and reflected on how and when it could be useful in life. And when I came from work, our daughter would tell me what she had learned and how important it was to know. We were amused by how she put our guests and acquaintances in an awkward position when she asked them what verse they had learned today and what it meant. Her childish sincerity reproved our friends better than any sermon, and after this they tried to prepare Bible verses before coming to us to worthily answer all children's questions.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Deut.6:6-9; 32:46-47; Luke.9:62; 1Tim.4:16; 5:8; Deut.11:10-12; Prov.12:10,28; Is.38:19; Joel.1:3 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What constancy in the family is discussed in this lesson?
5. What advantage does family constancy give?
6. Why is it important that there be constant requirements, expectations and laws in raising children?
7. How does a child feel if something is forbidden to him, then allowed, then forbidden again, and so always?
8. Should parents themselves have firm principles before teaching this to their children?
9. Do fair requirements of parents form something solid in the child's character?
10. How should family constancy be expressed and manifested? Give examples of some principles.
11. Should there be a certain goal in constancy toward which the child should be led?
12. Should constant family principles be based on God's will?
13. Are children under protection when there's certain constancy in their upbringing?

14. What examples of family constancy in upbringing do you encounter in the Bible?

## A Child's Crying and Weeping

There's such a saying: "Whatever the child amuses himself with, as long as he doesn't cry." Children's crying and screaming are a natural way for the child to communicate with the external world and with his caregivers. This can also be caused by internal pain or discomfort and the child's desire to convey important information about his feelings to the surrounding world.

There can be dozens of various reasons for expressing crying or weeping, which parents can often determine unerringly, but sometimes even they get lost in guesses, trying to understand what their child is experiencing.

Observing mothers who have small children, I was always amazed at how they can distinguish the voice, cry and weeping of their child from dozens of other voices and determine by the strength of this sound how much their help is needed and whether their child is in danger. I also witnessed how an exhausted mother simply didn't react to crying and screaming and explained this by saying that there was nothing terrible in this noise, since the baby was being willful, and one shouldn't pay attention to his whims. But as soon as the child's cry changed to a different timbre, his mom immediately left all affairs and hurried to her treasure, considering everything else of little importance.

I don't remember how I behaved in childhood, but from my mom's stories I understood that I wasn't a special person, and she was an ordinary mom who loved me very much and did everything so that I would live well and comfortably.

Understanding the child's needs and requirements, his physiology, experiences and age peculiarities, one can quickly determine the reason for his emotional mood.

A child's scream is a louder sound that requires immediate attention to himself and his needs. It's also an expression of pain, anger or fright.

A child's crying is usually a softer and more prolonged attempt by the baby to attract attention to himself. It doesn't require instant reaction, but expresses the need for feeding, touch, comfort or personal presence of someone close.

There can be many reasons for expressing such noise. For example, hunger, thirst, pain, discomfort, fatigue, lack of caresses, communication or attention, fear, anxiety, solidarity with those around, overwork, change of environment, problems with digestion or health, lack of sleep or premature awakening, stress, boredom, expression of independence, attempt to manipulate parents and much else. And the mother feels the child's condition and reacts to his needs.

It often happens that the baby's tears haven't dried yet, and he's already beaming with a smile from ear to ear in his parents' arms. All these noises aren't something special and unpredictable. Most likely, these are natural sounds when there's a child in the house. And the more children are in the house, the more noise they create. And parents' task includes the ability to distinguish the reason for crying and weeping and react accordingly, responding to the child's needs or directing his attention in the right direction.

It's worth paying attention to the special cry of a child that's caused by the desire to manipulate parents or defending his egoistic position. And when the child doesn't get his way, this cry and weeping can turn into hysteria and get out of control. Even experienced parents don't always understand what needs to be done in such cases, especially if this happens in a public place. Hysteria can happen even with calm and well-mannered children at any age. What should never be done is to scream at the child or punish him. It can be very difficult to determine the reason for such disorders, but the noise grows, and no instruction or comfort works. In such cases it's best to take the child out of the public room to the street and distract his attention to other things if possible, or if this is at home, leave the baby alone, giving him the opportunity to come to himself independently. If this happens in his room, you can also turn on calm melody for him and by your behavior make it clear that

you love him. And having closed the door behind him, pray to the Heavenly Father for intervention in this situation and comfort for your child.

I once had such an event in a store. My daughter decided to get something, but encountered polite refusal, which caused her indignation and led her to hysterical screams. Usually no one pays attention to children's noise, but at this moment all buyers began to observe what was happening. I left the cart with purchases and carried the raging little person outside, where she continued her wailing. And so as not to attract the attention of passersby, I put her in the car and closed the doors from outside, praying for help and waiting to see how this would end. The noise lasted several more minutes, and then began to quiet down, turning into ordinary crying. My daughter began knocking on the window and pointing to her wet tights. She had wet herself from the stress she experienced and switched to an urgent problem. I opened the door and took her in my arms, and she began complaining about wet clothes, which we immediately replaced and were comforted. After this I didn't scold my daughter and didn't remind her of what happened. The reason for what happened never became clear to me, but one shouldn't panic when such a spirit actively manifests itself. Love helps find a way out of any difficulty.

Not always does a child's cry or weeping turn into hysteria. Rather, this is an exception if parents understand the reason for children's demands. But if the baby understood that by intensifying crying he can achieve some forbidden or desired things, his whims can become a norm of life with transition from crying to hysteria. And parents' attempts to stop this arbitrariness with rudeness or punishment can only worsen the situation.

One shouldn't conduct explanatory conversations during such an incident. It's worth waiting until the child calms down, comes to himself, gets distracted, forgets, and then bring him to talk about the conflict that happened in a friendly manner so he can calmly analyze his behavior and draw conclusions. Through correct questions and cheerful conclusions one can

lead the baby to condemn himself as having acted incorrectly and even be able to add how one should act in such cases. But such a conversation should proceed in a friendly form, without condemnation and threats. In an atmosphere of love it will be easier for the child to analyze his behavior and admit his mistakes.

One way or another, any child will sometime decide to achieve his goal through hysteria. And if other children are present during this, they don't welcome their peer's behavior, but observe with interest the adults' reaction. Children learn from others' examples, and parents' wise response will help them not fall into such extremes, and conversations on these topics will allow them to control their desires within accepted rules.

And it's always necessary to lead the conversation to the Divine vision of what happened and point to the One Who doesn't slumber and always watches what happens, wanting to endow those who pray with good thoughts and feelings. God doesn't want children's crying to become Satan's instrument in controlling parents' will, so He's always ready to give wisdom to those who ask Him for it.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read James.1:5-7; Prov.19:8; Luke.9:39; Eph.4:30-32; Ex.2:6; Ps.83:7; Matt.5:4; Luke.7:13; Rev.21:4 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Is a child's cry or weeping something negative that needs to be fought?
5. What do you experience when you hear the cry of other people's children who interfere with your peaceful life?
6. Do you think Jesus cried and screamed when He was a Baby?
7. Do you think Heaven sees crying and screaming children in us?
8. Does the Lord carry us in His arms when we begin to be capricious and cry?

9. Why does a child's crying sometimes get out of his control and turn into hysteria that's difficult to stop?
10. Do you have experience of how to fight a child's hysteria?
11. Do children throw tantrums in families where dictatorship and violence reign?
12. Does the Lord help find the best solution in comforting a child when all usual methods don't help?
13. What will happen to a child if parents satisfy all his whims?
14. What do you experience when you see how other people's children arrange public concerts and their parents indulge them and make concessions?

## Parental Control

Have you ever wanted to return to childhood or immerse yourself in a child's world, where there aren't those cares that press on you from all sides, and where there's no responsibility for what happens around? Absence of responsibility is a certain protection for babies' psyche and mind. They can live peacefully, naturally analyze, unhurriedly decide and perform their little affairs.

Large ships that are capable of withstanding storm attacks, sailing long distances and transporting large cargo are manufactured at a peaceful shipyard in a quiet harbor, where there are no storms. The Lord, giving children to His children, places them in such conditions where babies will be cared for, and where they can safely develop, acquiring necessary knowledge and practical skills, so that having gone out into the world, they can worthily endure all life storms, carry the burden of responsibility and walk with God over great distances. And they learn all this in the peaceful environment of the parental home.

Children's irresponsibility protects the child from many troubles, illnesses and stress. He completely trusts parents and accepts from them what they decide to give him and what they want to teach.

It's not in parents' power to put suitable temperament or correct will expression into their child. Any mother of many children will tell you that all her children are different from birth. They react differently to the same action and behave in their own way. The Lord Himself decides whom to give us, considering our peculiarities and putting a part of father and mother into the child's nature. Also, fallen nature is laid into every person, which is inherited by us from Adam and will be in us until death itself or until the Second Coming of Christ. And parents' obligation includes responsibility before God to teach children to resist this fleshly nature.

Although the newborn's life experience is like a clean sheet of paper, the baby already has a certain will and knows how and at what time to express it to achieve his goals.

While the child doesn't bear responsibility for his behavior, his parents' righteousness is imputed to him. But parents must form in their child's heart those correct principles of Christian upbringing that will help worthily overcome all life's difficulties. Just as cleanliness and hygiene of the body must be approached responsibly and uncompromisingly, so the struggle for purity of the child's heart will be a difficult occupation for parents.

Parents should understand and accept the fact even before the birth of their first child that being father and mother is not playing with dolls, but a sacrifice to God, Who will not accept from us something sick or crippled. And this is enormous responsibility before the entire Universe for the trust shown to us. To help in fulfilling such a task we're given special wisdom and strength from above.

Entrusting children to us, the Lord didn't plan for their upbringing to be done by the state or our relatives, nannies or the street. Giving a small child into strangers' hands is a very big chance to give the enemy of the soul the opportunity to sow seeds of evil in the child's heart, which will necessarily sprout. Transition from good to evil is never quick, but wise parents immediately notice such deviations and begin to take necessary measures to nip all evil in the bud.

Vigilance must be present at all times in any sphere of upbringing. While children are in parents' power, much can be invested in the child's heart and the child's will can be put on track. When children grow up and certain responsibility is placed on their shoulders, then parents' influence no longer has that power it had in the beginning.

Purity of the child's heart is formed under constant parental control in the spirit of prayer and personal communication and relationships of parents with God. The Lord reveals to father and mother all children's sins and teaches how to react correctly to this or that misdeed.

In every child's life comes that moment when he challenges his parents and wants to know what he'll get for it. It's difficult to explain why this happens. Apparently, this is Adam's heritage. However, one shouldn't be afraid of this. Even the most obedient children sometimes behave very challengingly and consciously break all rules. One must be ready for such a turn of events and know what to do in this situation. It's difficult to give a general rule of how one should act in such cases, but the rebelling child should understand two things clearly:

1. That his parents unconditionally love him.
2. That such behavior will not go unpunished.

Children want to know who's the master in their house, and therefore they periodically make these checks in such a spirit. Such spontaneous antics don't speak of corruption of the child's heart, but they show that at this moment the child's fleshly nature got out of his control and decided to declare itself. He should be wisely shown that the masters of the house are the parents, and then he will accept this and submit under the loving hand.

One shouldn't allow children to find occupation or entertainment for themselves. All their affairs and movements should be under constant control of father or mother. Parents need to be far-sighted to foresee what influence this or that game, some book or friendship with peers has on their child.

Sleep time should begin according to established schedule, but not so early that the child can stay awake in bed. Usually in bedroom solitude many temptations come to the child's heart with which it's difficult for him to struggle, and he allows fleshly attacks to give free rein to sinful imagination and actions. Therefore one should take care that before sleep the child isn't excessively excited or overloaded with abundance of exciting food and drinks. One cannot make sleep a punishment, sending the violator to bed at the wrong time.

In our house there was a good tradition of reading useful books before sleep. This developed our daughter's outlook and united us into a friendly community of literature lovers. And then we

arranged a competition in who would fall asleep faster, and usually I lost, which very much gladdened my well-rested daughter every morning.

Children willingly communicate with their peers and quite quickly find common language, even if they don't understand each other. But we know that unfamiliar children have certain influence, and therefore we don't allow children to independently find occupation without our control.

Children in the family are new life for parents, in which one very often has to forget about oneself and one's desires to raise from a wild creature one who will be worthy of acceptance by Heaven. Not understanding this goal and not having responsibility in this matter, one can very quickly lose control over the child and get in return a field sown with weeds with which one will have to struggle all remaining life.

The child himself won't become one who inherits Eternity. The world in which we live won't miss a single opportunity to steal, kill and destroy our children.

Much is written about good in the Bible, and these examples are worthy science for imitation, which should be taught to children at all times, and then God will write this knowledge in the child's heart and mind.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Eph.6:1; Col.3:20-21; Prov.17:6; Gen.33:12-14; 1John.3:1-2,7; 2Sam.4:4; Ruth 4:16; 2Tim.3:2,16-17; Heb.12:9 in light of our lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Should parents control their little children's behavior?
5. What happens to those children who are allowed to live and act as they want?
6. Why should children understand what order is accepted in their house?
7. Should one monitor whom your children befriend and choose friends for them yourself?

8. Where does a child's rebellion come from and should one be afraid of it?
9. Should parents' control over children weaken over the years?
10. Why should children understand and see that they're unconditionally loved?
11. What should you do if the child became the main commander in the family?
12. Why shouldn't one give a small child to other people for upbringing?
13. How should one correctly react to children's rebellion?
14. What does the Lord do when we rebel and shake our fists at Heaven?

## Oh, These Parents!

We read in Amos 3:3: "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" Unity of parents in the matter of upbringing and especially in the area of punishing children must unambiguously be present. Special power of influence lies in this union, and God is interested in using united people as His representatives.

A child's character is like a small stream in a valley that strives toward a certain goal and seeks for itself those paths of least resistance along which it could pave its way, in order to then calmly flow along its channel and absorb into itself everything it comes into contact with. This stream, meeting any obstacle, doesn't destroy it, but calmly accepts it as a given and seeks ways to go around it in order to flow further.

While the stream is small, one can very easily give it direction, laying out channels for it and collecting it into small lakes. But the further this stream flows, the more full it becomes, rapidly gaining speed and capturing new spaces. And it's no longer afraid of any obstacles. It independently makes decisions on overcoming all difficulties.

And if you look at the initial path of this stream, you understand that if it had been given another direction, it might never have been where its waters now swiftly flow.

Children feel and understand very well how firm the laws and rules are in their family. Without executive power all these orders have a recommendatory character and are only capable of giving useful information. And the child already decides for himself how much he needs to be obedient and where he can show self-will. But when childish egoism meets some boundary beyond which certain punishment awaits him, it's not difficult for him within these frameworks to give direction to his interests and simultaneously seek a loophole to dive unpunished into the world of the forbidden.

When one of the parents has one opinion or view on punishment execution, and the other has a completely different

point of view, then the child very quickly uses this situation in his interests and takes that position that most suits his fleshly nature, or from which there's nowhere to go when dealing with tyrannical authority. And the baby isn't to blame for the fact that his parents can't agree with each other and come to common opinion in the matter of discipline. By his childish nature he simply tries to determine what his dad and mom want, and if they don't have agreement, then he makes decisions himself and establishes himself in them.

Parents' ignorance in the matter of upbringing and punishment will necessarily periodically create conflicts, which children will witness. It's very foolish and dangerous to defend your rightness in children's presence or show disagreement with some action of your spouse. Even winning in an argument won't bring the proper effect that can be achieved only in complete unity and agreement.

When the mother thought up punishment and began to implement it, and the father intervened and began to protect the disobedient child, considering that he's still small, at this moment the child's mind immediately noted an ally for itself, and next time the child will invariably seek protection under daddy's wing.

Or if the father understood that the baby's crime should be punished by standing in the corner, and the mother considers that this shouldn't be done and demonstratively leads the violator to freedom, then the child gets confused in understanding discipline, but sees in mom's face his protector and will necessarily seek protection from her at the next threat of punishment.

By their disagreements parents drop each other's authority, and then are surprised at their children's self-will and whims.

Even if one of the parents is wrong, this shouldn't be revealed in the presence of younger family members. But if there's no way to restrain oneself, then it's necessary to wisely approach solving this question.

There are some religions that present Jesus as cruel and demanding in His claims to law violators. But here His mother comes on the scene and begins to intercede for the sinner, maternally softening just anger through intercession requests of the sinner himself or his relatives, and she convinces Jesus not to impose punishment on the guilty but to forgive him for her name's sake. People who have seen such a picture in their parents very quickly accept such religion, deifying maternal love that covers everything. From here we see how much evil and unbelief progresses on our earth.

I agree that a mother perceives any action against her child as action against herself and sympathizes with the child sometimes more than the child himself worries about this. This is how women are made, and this needs to be understood. But in the matter of punishment one shouldn't rely on one's feelings and forgive everything, just so as not to cause pain to the violator. Pain of punishment or loss or limitation very clearly shows the sinner that such a path promises nothing good, and wise instruction from father or mother provides the best way out of any dead end.

Children are very clever in their development, and their imagination can paint anything for them. Seeing disagreement between dad and mom, they will necessarily use this for their purposes. For example, mom forbade snacking, and the son runs to dad and convinces him that he needs to eat. The father, without consulting mom, gives approval, just so he won't be distracted from interesting correspondence. Mom hears noise in the kitchen and catches the violator red-handed, and he boldly points to father and makes him an accomplice to his crime. The father, instead of understanding the son's cunning and punishing him, begins to defend his right to be head of the family and the necessity of considering his decisions. And the son gladly supports such headship within this case. Parents begin an argument, and "Vaska listens and eats."

When there are agreed rules in the house, it's very simple for father or mother to reveal little schemers' cunning and conduct an explanatory conversation with children. Even their busyness

won't be an obstacle in determining violation. And children understand and accept this, realizing that there are no loopholes in parental defense.

Usually when a child asks permission for this or that matter, I'm interested in what mom said. And if she hasn't decided anything yet, I ask to first find out her opinion, and if she allows me to make the decision, then I give approval and ask to necessarily inform mother about this.

It's difficult for the baby to struggle against parents' unity.

Even if I see that wrong permission was given for something, or punishment was unfair, I don't hurry to intercede or cancel the decision made by my wife. Not because I'm indifferent, but because by this action I drop the mother's authority and open doors for even greater evil.

We discuss all our disagreements far from children, not bringing our feelings and opinions to their view, thus carefully preserving our parental authority from destruction within the family.

It's not difficult for children to accept that way of life that's led in their house. They consider this the norm and form their worldview precisely in these relationships, the example of which is constantly before their eyes.

The importance of unity destroys the enemy of the soul's plans not only in church society, but in any family.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read John.17:11,21-23; Rom.15:5-7; Eccl.12:11; Ezek.11:19-20; 1Pet.3:8-13; Acts.1:14; 2:1; 2Cor.13:11; Phil.2:1-5 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Why is it so important for parents to be united in raising children?
5. Does unity in the family teach us to be equally united in church?
6. Who gives unity and where does it arise from?

7. Why is it so important for father and mother to be able to agree with each other about everything?
8. What benefit do disagreements bring to the family? And why are there so many of them then?
9. Do you think children see our unity in upbringing principles?
10. How will children feel if behavior rules and home laws constantly change?
11. Why is God sometimes called the God of order? 1Cor 14:33: "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."
12. What benefit does father and mother's unity bring to the family? And why is there so little of this?
13. How to achieve unity in the family if it doesn't exist?
14. What will unity with the child but disagreement with the husband lead to?

## Parents from God

When I have something that I consider mine, I have the freedom to use it as I see fit. But if I have something that doesn't belong to me but is given to me for temporary use, then I have limited power over someone else's property. And what doesn't belong to me and isn't given into my power has no relation to me.

Young parents need to understand whose child is the one born into their family. An honest answer to this question helps build and plan their further relationship and approach to raising this person. The question arises: "If this child is born from us - from father and mother, but he is not ours, then whose is he?" Believers usually say: "God's." But with their attitude and behavior, they may declare to Heaven that they are the masters of this little person and the voice of his conscience, and no one else.

God doesn't quarrel with such parents, doesn't punish them with lightning from heaven, and allows them to decide for themselves how and what to do. But He observes everything that happens in such families, and a book of remembrance is written before His face.

Those parents who don't even consider themselves parents but are seekers of sensual pleasures and aren't interested in the consequences of their sins also cause special pain to Heaven when unwanted children come into the world.

But God also has such parents who understand their status and value the high trust shown to them by Heaven, and with reverence receive from God's hands that treasure which is their son or daughter, and realize all the responsibility for the trust shown. They can be boldly called parents from God.

They may not have experience and knowledge in child-rearing, they may not have sufficient means to provide themselves and their children with everything necessary, but they have an understanding that God has placed upon them a great

responsibility that will not be removed from them until a certain time. They have faith in the One who will surely help them.

Recognizing their dependence on God doesn't make parents super wise people, but it lays a good foundation for obtaining necessary knowledge and experience in alliance with the Most Powerful Forces in the entire Universe.

God, for His part, endows His faithful stewards with all the necessary qualities of soul and character that will help parents make correct and wise decisions, foresee dangers, and plan for the future.

Parents from God are God's representatives to their children. And there's nothing reprehensible in this, since they are given this authority in their family, and their task includes not only revealing the correct image of God to children but also restoring and forming the Divine character in these little people. Father and mother not only shape their child into a law-abiding person but also form a character suitable for life in Eternal dwellings. And without Divine participation, a simple sinful person lacks both wisdom and strength to fulfill such a responsible task.

The love of husband and wife for each other lays a beautiful model of relationships in their home. They already have a good beginning, and each new child flows into their family to share this accepted love equally among all and bring joy to the general friendly atmosphere.

Parents from God are unique in that they know Whose they are, from Whom they receive strength and wisdom, where to go, and what goal is in their life. They are in constant communication with Heaven and feel their dependence on God. And the Lord doesn't leave His servants to the mercy of this world but gives them much more than they ask and hears all their prayers and concerns.

God is more interested in the salvation and upbringing of our children than we can imagine. The highest price imaginable was paid for their lives. And such an evaluation helps

understand that we are not alone and that nothing is impossible for God.

Child-rearing includes many different factors of perception, stages of growth, and external influences that are taken into account from above and based on which the Lord acts in the lives of parents.

It's important for a child not only to instill good manners but also to preserve him from the harmful influence of the world and teach him to independently resist the enemy of the soul and choose good.

The alliance of God with parents from Him is very important. By default, parents can guess that they are God's stewards of His children and agree with this, but when they consciously acknowledge this fact and ask God to endow them with everything necessary to fulfill this mission, then their prayers are based not only on faith that they will receive some answer to their requests, but on the fact that they are in covenant with God and are engaged in raising God's property and need additional blessing for themselves and their children.

How experienced drivers feel, one of whom has a license to drive, and the other has only experience. Both can operate a car. Only the one with rights is bold and fears no one, while the one without rights shudders at the sight of every policeman.

The conscious alliance of parents with God gives them more rights and advantages in raising children than those who only guess that perhaps Someone up there will help but decide all questions by their own strength.

When I take another book about child-rearing or go to a lecture on this question and ask God to endow me with wisdom from above in understanding what I don't know based on our covenant with Him, this looks much better than if I rely on my intuition and education.

God especially honors those who are in covenant with Him.

The Lord is the Most Reliable Entrepreneur and Partner in any enterprise. He never violates the conditions of the agreement

with His servants and does His part of the work faithfully and timely. But at the same time, He doesn't do for people what is expected from them.

If parents neglect the upbringing of their children and choose computers or television as nannies, then an angel won't come from Heaven and pull the plug from the socket. But the Holy Spirit will surely convict such ignorance and show the better way if the parents' ears are open.

Raising children for God is not only constant joy and mutual love, it's also constant struggle with oneself, with one's laziness, with the child's free will, with the influence of evil, with the opinion of strangers, and with everything that tries to bring chaos and destruction into your family. Don't think that if you've made a covenant, everything will now be easy and smooth - this is only the beginning of a great confrontation where the enemy doesn't surrender for a second without a fight. But we have an advantage - Jesus has already won this war, and we enter the army of the Victor to go with Him from victory to victory. Winners don't sit in defense but advance and conquer new territories, destroying all the enemy's plans. We have the Wisest Commander who hasn't lost a single battle.

Parents from God are soldiers of God's army who understand Who is in charge and to Whom everything belongs. They're not afraid to make mistakes but learn from them and pass on the experience of their victories to other people.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Gen. 18:19; 33:5; Deut. 6:7; Eph. 6:4; Prov. 20:7; 3 John 1:4; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Pet. 5:1-5; Ps. 126:3; 127:1; Jer. 1:5; Phil. 2:15; Isa. 54:13, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What does it mean to be a parent from God?
5. What's the difference between ownership and temporary management?
6. To whom does the child belong who is born into the family? Why do you think so?

7. Why doesn't God intervene by force in parents' methods of upbringing?
8. What's the difference between parents from God and those who raise children without God?
9. Why do parents from God correctly represent God to their children?
10. How do parents participate in forming God's character in children? What should be the main thing in this undertaking?
11. Why is it important for a child to feel like part of a loving family?
12. How do parents from God understand their dependence on God and His participation in their lives?
13. How does the alliance of parents with God differ from ordinary intuitive upbringing?
14. What's the difference between raising children for yourself and raising them for God?

## Generational Continuity

Generational continuity is the process of transmitting knowledge, culture, spiritual values, traditions, righteous and sinful heritage from one generation to another. This feature is an integral part of each person's identification with a particular family, lineage, people, and country. If this connection is broken, then a person loses their identity and begins to adapt to one group or another, or starts everything from scratch.

Being born into a particular family, a child enters the natural environment of all the people around him and close relatives and begins to absorb everything he sees and hears, what he studies and understands. Language, manner of communication, way of life, reaction to events, behavior accepted in the father's house - all this becomes the norm of life for the growing person, and he becomes part of precisely that society in which he finds himself and develops.

The continuity of certain qualities or characteristics is a natural path in the development of each person. Family is the first stage that lays the foundation for everything else. After this, all kinds of social groups and societies have their influence and formation: kindergarten, school, friends, neighbors, higher educational institutions, work. And if all this is in one country and in one city or village, then your child will become a cultural representative of precisely this region.

The Bible traces generational continuity and how they preserved their spiritual values, passing them from generation to generation. And if someone separated, like Ishmael, then a new cultural branch already went from him.

Modern mass media now introduce their global changes and characteristics throughout the world, destroying cultural roots, globally destroying spiritual values, and erasing the identity of many countries and peoples. Urbanization (growth of cities and increase in the number of their inhabitants) destroys the identity of the nation and offers a multicultural society in one

package, which makes a person no longer a representative of some culture, but a resident of a certain area.

Christianity is a culture of Heavenly origin that has deep historical heritage and strong roots. Although in some families it may begin from scratch, in church brotherhood it has the deepest connections extending to the patriarch Abraham, and from him to Noah and Adam. Entering this society by the fact of being born again, each new member becomes part of a huge Heavenly family and absorbs all the spiritual values of this culture while maintaining their earthly identity of the place where they were born and raised.

Generational continuity is a strong connection between past, present, and future that is carried out in any country at all levels. Families pass on their family values to children. Elders - their experience, knowledge, and wisdom. Society - its culture and traditions. Church - its faith, hope, and love. Science - its experiments, discoveries, and achievements. State - its law, order, foundations, and morality.

And in all our cultural diversity, a clear line of the Plan of Salvation is traced, which is the same in all cultures and which brings all God's children into unity of faith, friendship, and love without destroying the uniqueness, mentality, and perception of each person.

Faith in God and agape love make any believer a universal person who can adapt to any culture and be in demand among any people if the traditions of these peoples don't go against God's principles.

There's another type of continuity that is passed from generation to generation to the third and fourth generation - this is a sinful way of life or a deal with the spirits of wickedness in heavenly places. God doesn't ask payment from children for their parents' sins and is ready to destroy generational curses at any stage if He is asked, but He observes how we raise our children and what we put into their minds.

I teach my child, passing on family and spiritual values in two ways: consciously - when I understand what I'm investing in

him and what I'm teaching, and unconsciously - when I live by myself and do my own things without thinking about what influence this has on my offspring. And the child sees and notices much more than we imagine. His desire to imitate parents is much stronger than it might seem from the outside. The child is arranged so that he is transformed into what he looks at.

Why does the older generation call on young people to choose their future partner not by appearance but by inner content, because your other half together with you will have a colossal influence on your children and their children.

The sin that I unconsciously commit or understand what it is gives the enemy of the soul the right to pass this habit by inheritance to my children.

For example, there's a certain people in whose culture deception and theft are considered the norm of life and prosperity. They don't punish children for this sin but beat them if they get caught or steal from their own. How can you explain to such a person that this is bad when he's been saturated with this concept since early childhood?

And if in your house it's accepted to call names, fight, and curse, then such a spiritual atmosphere will subsequently be perceived by the grown-up child as the norm of life, and he will project this model in his family and get satisfaction from such a destructive spirit.

Faith in God and prayer of faith can stop any generational curse at any stage of your life and not pass this chain further. But not everyone wants this, and not everyone believes that this is possible.

We see how King David's sin destroyed his life and the lives of his adult children. How King Solomon introduced such abominations into Israel that future generations couldn't completely get rid of.

We also read that spiritual continuity was passed from Christ to the apostles, and through them to other disciples, and reached

our days, establishing itself in truth and enriching us with new revelations and knowledge.

At certain times, God established His messengers and prophets to endow us through them with that spiritual continuity that will keep us from all evil and show the snares of the evil one.

Now we can choose what continuity suits us better and satisfies us. From all sides, the world offers us thousands of pleasures, but only God has one truth, one way, and one faith through Jesus Christ to endow us through all this with Heavenly values, put His law in our hearts, and teach us to live so that we would be in the blessing of love for a thousand generations.

The world offers riches, sin, emptiness, and many sensual pleasures that literally flood people's consciousness with all kinds of abundance of information. And we give birth to our children among all this universal evil and think that they will somehow figure it out themselves and choose good. No, they will drown and perish, adopting the customs of the world, if we don't teach them to believe, fight, and overcome as Jesus overcame. It is precisely parents who can lay a solid foundation for the future happiness or unhappiness of a child, and God will establish this work with His Spirit and approval.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Ex. 34:7; Deut. 4:9; 7:9; Joel 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:5; Hos. 4:6; Ezek. 18:19-20; John 8:36; Jer. 35:16-19 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. How is generational continuity traced in the Bible?
5. How was spiritual continuity passed from Christ to the apostles and further?
6. Why do mass media contribute to the destruction of spiritual values?
7. How do parents pass values to children consciously and unconsciously?
8. How does family atmosphere influence a child's future life?

9. Why can a sinful way of life be passed to the third and fourth generation?
10. How can faith and prayer stop a generational curse?
11. What biblical examples show the consequences of one person's sin for subsequent generations?
12. When does the transmission of spiritual values and that faith in Christ that parents have occur?
13. Why does it sometimes happen that believing parents raise unbelieving children?
14. Does the place of residence influence raising children in the right spirit?

## Why Shout?

Small children sometimes have an amazing ability to bring their parents to the "boiling point" and only after that react to expressed commands, prohibitions, and instructions. In some families, talking in high tones has become so habitual that simple and quiet speech isn't even perceived.

Anger, irritation, and parents' screaming are attempts to win a lost battle, to at least show the child in this way that they're still in charge here.

But what is shouting for? Why get angry? What will you prove to a small child by this? Is this really where the strength of parental authority lies?

Let's consider an example from your life. You're driving in a speed limit zone of 30 km/h at a speed of 70 km/h. On your way, you meet a person dressed in police uniform without a car and radar, who is angry at you because of your fast driving and sends curses and threats your way. Will this screaming affect the speed of your movement? Most likely, you won't even pay attention to it. Not seeing the possibility of carrying out these threats, you forget about the incident. Next time this person in uniform will jump with anger seeing your fast driving and wave fists in your direction. Will this stop you? Most likely not. And if this is repeated daily, you'll even stop paying attention to it.

But then one day you're habitually driving fast, a police car overtakes you and commands you to stop. For some reason, you feel uncomfortable. You tense up and begin to regret that you didn't pay attention to the signs and the speedometer arrow. The inspector politely asks you to show your license and car documents. You nervously give them to him and carefully catch every word. And he calmly informs you that his radar recorded your fast driving on camera, and he's forced to fine you, deprive you of the right to drive a car until court proceedings, and put your car in a penalty parking lot. You ask for forgiveness in a pitiful voice, justifying yourself by saying you were hurrying somewhere, and he calms you down and says that walking is

very healthy, and public transport isn't that expensive. You're asked to sign some protocol and peacefully released to go about your business, with your rights and car taken away in a known direction.

This representative of the city's higher authority didn't shout, didn't threaten, didn't get angry at you, but for some reason you didn't resist his authority and humbly accepted the verdict you deserved.

Shouting at a child is like devastating hail from which there's absolutely no benefit or blessing either to the shouting parent or to those listening to this noise. If you think that all means are good for achieving obedience, then in this case it's a very bad and poisonous means.

You won't achieve obedience by shouting but will cause irreparable damage to the child's psyche and force him to turn on protective mechanisms in his head that will protect him from the harm you want to cause him. The reaction to such parental behavior can be different, and much depends on the age and sensitivity of the little one.

What forces a child to show obedience isn't the strength of your anger, not skillfully selected threats of punishment, but your readiness to move from words to action. Children feel this boundary very clearly and, as a rule, don't bring matters to the "highest boiling point," not wanting to experience the action of punishment.

If I calmly established certain boundaries of behavior and monitor their observance, then I have the right to warn the child that he's approaching the forbidden line, after which I'll be forced to punish him. I have no need to get angry or shout to keep the little one from violation. I simply provide him with the opportunity to decide for himself what to do with my prohibition. He can make sure that I'm a strict dad or that it's good to be an obedient child.

Shouting at children destroys their trust in you, traumatizes their psyche, lowers their self-esteem, extinguishes their enthusiasm, changes their worldview, makes them capricious

and stubborn, teaches similar behavior, makes it difficult to concentrate on complex subjects, leads to intemperance, causes various diseases, suppresses immunity and the body's protective properties, reduces curiosity, endows with internal complexes of inferiority and fear, deprives of the sense of security in their own home, develops guilt, disrupts empathy in understanding other people's needs, creates a distorted image of family happiness, forms a negative attitude toward authorities, causes problems with making responsible decisions, and brings much other evil and no benefit. This list can be continued, supporting it with vivid examples from life, but for some reason many parents choose precisely this path of upbringing and achieving obedience and discipline.

Love and friendly attitude toward children works miracles. Even in this state, a child with a strong will will want to test parental love to understand how strong parental prohibitions are and what this punishment looks like, but he doesn't plan to test your patience on a permanent basis.

Knowing that you love him, he will certainly return to the boundaries of this love to once again make sure that it's better and more interesting to live this way.

Let's recall the case with the policeman. What will happen to you if, seeing your repentance, the authority representative decides to pay your fine himself and show you mercy by returning your rights and car? Will you drive again at the usual fast speed since you're under grace, or will you drive so carefully after this that your driving won't cause anyone anger or fury? Mercy and forgiveness shown to children tell them about your love for them but don't teach that now everything can be violated with impunity. And your assurance that next time there will be no mercy doesn't make you tyrants in their eyes since they're sure they'll never act this way again and know that you love and forgive them.

Obedience from love for you doesn't wait for the extreme "boiling point" or transition to action. Children like obedience from love. The mind turns on the desire to do good for the sake of good, which contributes to the active release of happiness

hormones, and it's very pleasant for the child's heart to experience this.

Calm instruction more convincingly influences consciousness than the scream of an authoritarian family head.

But if a child is accustomed to not reacting to a calm character of communication and shows persistent indifference to all rules, then he should be shown the strength of your action so that he's convinced that this line isn't as far as he thinks. Even though he may be indignant, don't let his noise disturb you. Next time he'll be more attentive to your requirements.

The sooner you win this victory of love in the battle between your will and the child's will, the calmer your child will feel in your company. Children need wise authority. They need someone who will set correct boundaries for them and teach them to respect these rules. Knowing their limits, children will calmly do everything they want within these conditions and feel protected and loved.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read James 1:19-20; Eph. 4:26-32; Col. 3:8; Prov. 12:16; 19:11,18-19; 22:24; 29:11; 30:32-33; Eccl. 7:9; 9:17; Gal. 5:19-23 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson? Did you discover something new for yourself?
4. How does God's anger differ from father's and mother's anger?
5. What benefit does shouting bring in raising children?
6. Why are anger and shouting from parents a destructive tool of upbringing?
7. What do you feel when your boss takes out his anger on you?
8. Does the unjust anger or shouting of your parents remain in your memory?
9. Why, even knowing about the harm of anger, do parents use precisely this method of influence?
10. What should I do if I have an evil spirit in me and understand that it's destroying my family's happiness?

11. What can be offered as an alternative to shouting and anger to achieve discipline?
12. If shouting is the most ineffective and destructive tool of upbringing, why do parents use it so often?
13. Should order be maintained in the house by Satan's methods?
14. Do you know the power of love and how it can effectively work and achieve order and obedience?

## Reproaches or Respect?

When I remember my childhood, I notice that the older I become, the more moments are erased from my memory about that time. Much is absolutely forgotten, much is deleted from the mind forever, but those few people who were especially kind to me, showed genuine respect, saw a promising person in me, for some reason aren't forgotten and always remain in my memory as those who were invisible inspirers and support for my childish self-esteem. Many of these people are no longer alive, but warmth and deep gratitude to these special messengers of Heaven still remain in my heart - those who saw something good in me and valued me for being a person, albeit small, but real.

Our children are full-fledged people who, growing up, are at a certain stage of development and will someday certainly become adults and of age. Much will be erased from their memory forever, but the good they experienced in childhood, adolescence, and youth will leave its indelible mark in their memory and will often remind them that there is good in this world.

Mathematics is an exact science, and it can very quickly penetrate the future and show you the real age of those who are still small now. Add any number to a child's age, and you'll immediately know how old he'll be after this time. And then look at how people of the same age look and behave. And you can be sure that your young creatures won't differ from others in intellectual development if you invest usual knowledge and skills in them.

One of my friends received a task from the church to conduct Sabbath school lessons with preschool children. And all parents were surprised at how eagerly children attended his classes and then gladly told what knowledge they received. And the secret of his success was that my friend treated each child with genuine respect and communicated with him as with an adult, showing interest in everything the children did and said. The children really liked feeling big and respected, and they, in

turn, tried to maintain this new status with dignity and understanding.

We often underestimate our little ones, considering them still small and unreasonable. For a mother, this is just a child who was just weaned from the breast and who barely learned to walk. And when reason awakens in this little person and begins to gain momentum in its infinite development, then it's necessary to understand that according to God's plan, this person has the same need for respect for himself as a person, for self-identification, for determining his life path, for self-respect, and much else that is inherent in an adult person.

Criticism, nagging, reproaches don't develop the creative potential of a small family member but can create a complex of inferiority in his consciousness, make him fearful, weak-willed, and a person limited by fears. And he then takes this into adult life and drags this burden, afraid to show initiative or suggest more creative solutions to any tasks.

If a child feels like a second-class person in his family, then his natural development processes are disrupted, and this can lead to rebellion in the teenage period or to isolation in subsequent years.

Unfortunately, our society consists of many souls crippled by wrong upbringing who carry heavy consequences of disrespect and criticism from early childhood throughout their lives and don't know how to change and correct something.

But there's good news that hope for something better exists for such people too. God has provided unique opportunities for them to change everything. His grace and love are capable of working miracles of transformation and creating something new and beautiful in the soul.

But while children are small, much can be changed and corrected so as not to hinder them from naturally developing and living according to God's laws and principles.

If a child is disobedient, this isn't a reason for his humiliation and insult. Even being in a state of rebellion or revolt, he needs

respect for himself and understanding of his temporary problems. Wise punishment quickly brings a rebel out of a state of rebellion, but a humiliating word causes injuries for a long time and leaves deep wounds in the child's soul.

Although reproaches and nagging from parents may seem fair and appropriate to them, they, like leprosy, block consciousness with the disease "I'm right" and deprive the mind of accepting wiser solutions to complex questions.

Humiliating a child is a sin because by this we blaspheme his Creator and make ourselves idols whom children should serve. And humiliating a child publicly is also destroying his authority in the eyes of witnesses. And what will such sowing lead to? One can imagine that nothing good.

Many parents have fears that they'll over-praise their little household members, and they'll become proud, arrogant egoists. And therefore parents prefer to keep children in "iron gloves," afraid to express praise or admiration once more.

We're given advice about excessive praise of ministers and about the harm of applause in church, but these rules shouldn't be applied to our household members who desperately need a kind word, a compliment, respect. And they don't want to have this spontaneously or earn it in some special way. The human heart thirsts for constancy in such matters and wants the parental home to be a source of these blessings.

Unfortunately, many people can't even count on the fingers of one hand those moments in their parental home when adults expressed respect toward them.

If I as a father am obliged before the state and society to care for food and clothing for my family, then I should remember my responsibility before God - to feed these people with respect, love, kindness, tender words, and compliments. Although this is spiritual food, it also nourishes the soul. And what happens to those who aren't fed, who are given kicks and cuffs instead of food? They go to seek this food on the side and ask the enemy of the soul to give them something similar. And the enemy gives a fake and makes the situation even worse.

Correct self-esteem protects the child's soul from many temptations. Seeing and receiving parental love, he is under special protection of this good, and it's difficult for the enemy to destroy such bastions of God's blessings.

You'll never over-praise those you love. You simply won't have enough imagination to cause them harm because there are so many good facts and characteristics in their lives that are worth paying attention to that there won't be a desire to dig in mistakes and shortcomings. And any mistake in behavior is a reason to learn something and reconsider something in one's life.

Respect won't harm the little one's mind. It won't cripple his soul or make him proud. This is what any child's heart needs at any age.

Any flower is more pleasant to grow when it's cared for and admired. But with flowers, we people sometimes behave more wisely than with those who are much better and more perfect than all plants.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Phil. 4:8; Ps. 126:3; Prov. 4:1; 14:1,11; 27:2; 31:28; Gen. 34:19; 49:3; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:18-21; Job 5:2-4; Isa. 8:18; 1 John 3:18; 3 John 1:4 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Why shouldn't children be raised in the spirit of nagging and reproaches?
5. What benefit do constant reproaches bring to the child's soul?
6. How can wise reproaches sound? And can they be wise? For example: "Vasya, how could you act like this? After all, you're a future professor!"
7. What do you experience when you hear sincere praise from your parents?
8. What humiliates a child's dignity?
9. Should it be understood that your child is a person who deserves respect?

10. Why is it necessary to treat your children with respect, and others too?
11. What benefit will developing self-respect bring to a child?
12. Can correct posture also influence a child's self-worth?  
Should this be taught? Prov. 30:29-31.
13. Can the upbringing you received in childhood influence the upbringing of your own children?
14. Is self-worth some kind of accident or innate character trait?

## Purity of Soul

One writer wrote these words: "Protect your dress when new, and your honor from youth." And this instruction contains special wisdom for our time. Apart from external and visible beauty and cleanliness of the body, there also exists an inner world of a person, which very clearly demonstrates itself through many processes of communication with other people.

Observing the behavior of this or that person, seeing their reaction to what's happening around them, their manner of communication, their consistency and many other factors, one can very quickly determine what kind of person they are in their soul. We read in Prov. 20:11: "Even a child is known by his deeds, whether what he does is pure and right." Maintaining spiritual and soul purity of a child is as important a part of upbringing as external hygiene and nutrition.

Everything that a child comes into contact with, what he sees, what he hears, what he thinks about, becomes his possession, which has an indelible influence on the soul and consciousness and creates a certain worldview. The very first opinion that was understood and accepted by a young mind becomes a lifelong possession of a person and can remain so throughout their entire life.

Parents' task includes the duty to get ahead of the world and fill their children's hearts with correct attitudes, opinions, knowledge, facts and proofs. We read in Prov. 18:17: "The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him." If a child's heart is filled with good concepts that have convinced him of truth and become part of his worldview, then it will be very easy for him to reject any temptations and resist all evil. We know that prevention of diseases and avoiding contact with infectious people is much better than treating what has broken your body.

Our age is very dangerous with its temptations and abundance of sinful pleasures, which so pleasantly lure into their nets that you simply don't know where to escape from this.

If you put boundaries, barriers, fences around a child, then sooner or later he will want to know what's behind them, why they're so high, whether he's in a prison of parental prohibitions. And there will come a time when your children will go out into the world and taste all its power. And all external fences will collapse and remain in memory as the childhood home.

But if these boundaries are placed inside the heart by the child himself, and he understands the importance of their presence, then these barriers will powerfully protect his heart and keep it from all evil.

The concept of good and evil is necessary for every person. They help him clearly see what is good and what is bad. But the restraining force not to do evil comes not from rules and laws, but from personal relationships with Jesus and through communication with the Heavenly Father by means of the Holy Spirit. And a person's conscience is the determining factor. Through it the Lord can influence the will and convince the heart of sin.

When teaching children good principles and forbidding them bad things, parents themselves must correspond to everything they want to see in others. If daddy teaches that playing computer games is bad, but does it himself, then such prohibitions have a strange character. It is desirable that such and other sources of temptations do not penetrate the home and family communication in any form while children are small.

Nothing makes children dependent and ignorant in knowing the world as quickly as computer and phone games. These activities develop dopamine addiction and very quickly release serotonin into the blood. This is like eating chocolate. It's tasty, quickly consumed, brings joy and pleasure, sends a satiety signal to the brain, but doesn't give the body necessary substances and blocks the frontal lobes that analyze what's happening.

If I decide that the nanny for my child should be television and phone, and at least sometimes allow these companions to occupy themselves with my children so that I can remain in

peace for some time, then I should remember that later for these minutes of peace I'll have to pay with years of anxiety.

It's one thing when a child somewhere as a guest saw something or even tried something, but knows that it's unclean. In this case, you can still explain something to him and somehow convince him not to repeat this, but when he receives temptation from my hands, how can he understand that this is dangerous for the soul?

While children are small, parents need to work so that everything that contributes to their life success, spiritual growth and growth in Christ is written into their heart's operative memory.

Children love to listen to all kinds of stories and are capable of listening to them hundreds of times. If it's tiresome for you to constantly repeat and read the same thing, then record this on some information carrier and teach the child to independently choose the needed story, marking each story with a certain picture. Children will gladly listen to daddy's stories performed by him and in his absence.

But nothing can replace live communication with parents, where father and mother feel the children's mood and their interests, notice their facial expressions and emotions. During communication you can embrace the little being, kiss him, change the topic of conversation and convince him that living in peace with God is as cozy as under the parental wing. A good and tender God associates very well with good and caring parents.

Purity of soul is that place in the heart where the Holy Spirit will bring His commandments and establish them in consciousness.

Any music teacher will tell you that teaching a child who knows nothing is much better and easier than re-teaching one who knows how to play incorrectly.

All early instructions in truth, written by parents into the heart, will be fresh in memory until old age and will suggest the true path throughout life.

When a child is outside home or outside parental control, then father and mother should know what society surrounds their child, whether there's danger for him from peers, what he does and what he watches. And when meeting, be sure to ask what happened, and not scold when he tells the truth, but undertake wise explanatory conversations if negative influence was exerted.

When under parental supervision a child experiences analysis of all his actions and deeds, then it's easy for him to orient himself and distinguish good from evil later.

God helps children taught truth to keep to the right path and supports them where there's no parental influence and help.

You must fight for the child's heart purity and tirelessly watch over the growing person. The enemy of the soul won't miss any opportunity to steal, kill and destroy. But while this temptation is still in its initial stage, it's easier to deal with it than later to eradicate vices and bad character traits.

You need to think well about whether it's worth giving small children to secular educational institutions in order to peacefully do your business, rest or earn money. The world will exert its harmful influence in these institutions, and it will be ten times more difficult for parents to fight for soul purity than if the child remained at home under the influence of believing family members. Don't think that Egyptian institutions will care about saving your children. They have their own program that rejects God and gives the right to death.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Matt. 5:8; Ps. 17:26-27; 23:3-5; 50:2; 72:1; 88:12; 100:2-4; 118:9; Prov. 20:9; 22:6; Eccl. 11:9-10; Titus 2:6-8; Mic. 6:11; Rev. 22:11, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?

4. What is purity of soul?
5. From what age should you begin teaching a child purity of soul?
6. Can an evil person raise a good child?
7. Why is it necessary to monitor who your children befriend and communicate with?
8. Why is it so important to control what information enters a child's mind?
9. Why do many believing parents give their children to secular kindergartens?
10. Is everything that the world offers children safe and useful?
11. What will children choose if their mentors don't watch?
12. Can believing parents form a pure heart in their children?
13. What should be done to raise from your child a person worthy of Eternal Life?
14. Do you think it's interesting for children to cooperate with parents in fighting for purity of their heart?

## Forced Instruction

Once our daughter told us that a boy, playing with her at our friends' house, led her behind a wardrobe, took off his underwear and began showing her what was underneath, asking her not to tell anyone about this. And then he told her to show him the contents of her underwear too. But our child decided first to consult with us. My wife immediately understood what was happening and looked sternly at this little boy, which greatly frightened him. We didn't publicly illuminate this situation because it was all very unexpected, and we had no experience of how to react properly to such incidents.

A similar incident prompted us to enlighten our daughter in these matters, and we began to ask God for wisdom and decided to delve into this topic. The Lord showed us that although our children are small, the enemy of the soul is already looking for loopholes to their hearts, sending them unclean thoughts and pushing them toward wrong actions. We knew this boy's parents and understood that they couldn't have taught him this, but somehow sin reached the young consciousness and pushed the innocent child toward such actions.

Our daughter, although still small, already understood that society is divided into boys and girls, men and women. And when we asked her to determine where some are and where others are, she did this almost without error. Confusion was caused by men's clothing and short haircuts on women or long hair on men. It was very interesting to delve into childish logic and notice by what criteria she distinguishes one sex from another.

What the daughter saw in her young friend prompted her to ask us many questions. For example, why does he have what she doesn't have? My wife and I had to find decent pictures and enlighten our child on this matter.

We understood that sooner or later she would begin asking about this, and if we didn't tell her, others would. Therefore we

took the initiative into our own hands and explained everything to our daughter, beginning the narrative from the day of creation, leading to the fact that sin became the reason why people needed long clothing. We read our daughter those verses where it was said about what clothing should be on a man and woman, what length these garments should be, and why one shouldn't expose their body publicly.

When our daughter went to bathe, my wife and I took turns on duty near the bathtub to monitor the child's safety. But now we decided that only my wife would bathe her, and we explained why.

The daughter very quickly understood the truth that she is a little woman, and what God concealed under her clothing, she shouldn't expose and show to anyone, except mama, in exceptional cases daddy, and doctors if there's necessity.

We also made her understand that if some girls want to examine intimate details of her body, she shouldn't show them anything either and shouldn't look at what they decide to demonstrate to her.

We also asked her to immediately share with us if similar incidents occur in their children's society. She promised to do this.

Considering our daughter's age, we didn't enlighten her according to the full program on this matter, and she was satisfied with what we told her. And later, from her correct answers to our unexpected questions about how one should act if this or that happens, we understood that the lesson was learned and the mind keeps everything under its control.

Any joint washing or bathing of different sexes simultaneously we also excluded from our rules, and this wasn't accepted by us anyway.

We also decided to tell our daughter where children come from, omitting delicate moments of marital relations. Other people had already taken care of this topic to properly and clearly

present this to children, and we showed her this whole process in a scientific film.

Looking ahead, I'll say that small children don't delve deeply into the details of childbirth. Visible facts are more interesting to them, but over time they have a question about where the seed comes from which forms the fruit. Here we had to explain that such a topic will open at a more mature age, which doesn't satisfy the young listener at all.

Considering that the world has made sin a science and displays all its abominations for show, and is aimed at corrupting young minds, parents' task includes getting ahead of the world in providing correct and useful information about the essence of things. Whether we want it or not, our children must learn the right things earlier than the world will offer this. And in this matter it's necessary to definitely get ahead of the enemy of the soul.

Putting our daughter to bed, we made sure she didn't spend a long time awake in bed, but fell asleep immediately. We also accustomed her so that her hands always lay on top of the blanket and made sure she never kept them in her underwear, touching what shouldn't be touched. We didn't focus attention on this so as not to arouse childish curiosity and not generate extra thoughts on this topic in the child's mind, but were very attentive to everything concerning intimate questions during the child's physical growth.

Regarding hygiene, my wife already taught our little daughter how to properly and quickly independently wash delicate parts of the body and how often this should be done. And when our daughter grew up and began monitoring the cleanliness of her body herself, we consciously limited shower time to a minimum and kept this under strict control, so as not to give occasion for unclean and lustful actions.

With age, themes about sexual education also changed, and we always had to ask for wisdom from above to get ahead of the world in these matters, but not make this topic the main one. And the Lord in each case after our conversations conveyed the

meaning of what was said to the child's consciousness and convinced our daughter of what we couldn't explain to her in detail. Cooperation with God is very important in educating and instructing young minds. We don't see what forces of evil our children encounter, but the Lord knows this and applies His hand and influence to our efforts, which contributes to successful assimilation of valuable lessons and knowledge and rejection of what is unclean and sinful.

Having enlightened our young soul, we also didn't forget about our friends' son and decided to talk with them on this topic and share our discoveries. We had no evil toward this boy, as we understood that he became a victim of incomprehensible temptations, and his father and mother didn't know this. The parents were frightened by such behavior of their son, but very wisely approached solving this question, enlightening their little son in all spheres of knowledge permissible for his age.

After this our children peacefully played with each other, and they no longer had similar incidents, and we became more attentive to our children's games.

It's difficult to say at what time the enemy of the soul begins to put his temptations into children's hearts and influence their imagination. But we understand that preventing some vice is much easier than later correcting it. Our whole life is a constant struggle with forces of evil and with that bad influence that the world has on us, and not only we are involved in this struggle, but all our relatives and close people for whom we bear responsibility.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Prov. 1:8; 5:11-13; 22:4,6; Gen. 2:25; 3:7-11,21; Ex. 20:26; 28:42; Lev. 18:6; Deut. 22:5; Isa. 47:2-3; Hosea 2:9-10; Rev. 3:18; in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. From what age can parents enlighten their children in the sphere of diversity and peculiarities of gender differences?

5. Should children be instilled from childhood with concepts of chastity, decency and modesty in clothing?
6. Should parents themselves correspond to those principles they want to lay in the child's mind?
7. What to do if the world's customs force you and your children to publicly expose your body?
8. How to handle visiting pools and beaches?
9. Should we pay attention at all to our nakedness and clothing, and children's clothing, when everyone around behaves as they want? 1 Pet. 2:9.
10. Do you think children understand or will understand what chastity, modesty and decency in clothing and appearance are?
11. Why is it so important to instill chastity skills in children from childhood?
12. Should we wait until the world tempts your children, and then begin enlightening them about what's good and what's bad?
13. What to do if children have already seen everything and don't pay attention to their nakedness and the nakedness of their relatives?
14. Does God pay attention to what we and our children wear and how decently we look?

## **Papa, Play with Me!**

If someone gave you 20 million dollars, what would you say to this person? I think you would thank them from your whole heart and would start thinking about how to best invest this money. And if they gave it to you with one condition, that your child wouldn't wake up tomorrow, would you agree to such a gift? I think any sensible father or mother wouldn't agree to exchange their children for any money, even if zeros began to be added to this figure. Your children's awakening and their morning joy are worth much more than all the riches of this world. The same can be said about any of us. There's no such figure of monetary sums that I would agree to trade for my morning awakening. And we are not our own, and our bodies belong to the Holy God, Who redeemed us with the blood of His beloved Son. We read about this in 1 Cor. 6:19-20.

But if such a question is asked to modern children, and instead of money a new smartphone or popular computer game, or television programs are offered, and in contrast the awakening of their father is put, then many will easily choose the first, and some of them won't even see the meaning of their awakening without all these gadgets and sources of entertainment. And this is the reality of the state of our society in which we live. Why does this happen? Because the god of this age has blinded the minds of people, so that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ might not shine for them... (2 Cor. 4:3).

The older children become, the more all kinds of ideas come to their heads. They are very creative, and can come up with all kinds of conclusions and expressions on the go, and their logic sometimes delights and surprises. They can make an interesting game out of nothing, and always find occupation for themselves.

Mama, as a rule, is always near the children, especially if they're still small. And papa is at work, or he's busy, or very tired.

Many people have made statistics of children's surveys, trying to understand how much time they spend communicating with their fathers. The obtained figures were stunning. From three to ten seconds a day! Some don't see their fathers for months, and some simply don't have them.

And if you take statistics of screen time that children spend in front of electronic devices and information carriers, these figures are no less surprising than the previous ones. From six to ten hours a day! Who do you think is engaged in raising our children? Where is their mind located? What values are being instilled in them by what they watch and what they play?

Every father will sooner or later hear such a request: "Papa, play with me!" What will you answer your child? Will you have enough courage to set aside all your important affairs, forget about fatigue and dedicate your time to the one whose awakening is more precious to you than all worldly riches?

It's easy to ask such questions, especially when children have grown up and have their own families. But I too have heard this request many times and didn't always respond positively to the child's needs. And time goes very quickly, and children, although they grow very slowly, mature and learn very quickly. And we parents teach them much, even if we don't have contact with them.

You can very easily teach a child that in this world there are more important things and affairs than he is. That there are personal interests that stand higher than family obligations. That there are even such types of service that I cannot exchange for my children's society. And children learn these lessons very well and don't argue with elders. They don't have enough wisdom to understand their fathers' busyness, their concerns, their burden of debts and problems they constantly solve. The child sees that he is less important, and therefore finds occupation or a game for himself, and sometime in his heart a break in values occurs and something happens that can never be restored. And there's no one to pass the baton of faith to and it's impossible to explain to the child that the Heavenly

Father loves him immeasurably more when there's no example of earthly father's love.

What awaits such fathers in the future? Their children will have their own circle of communication, and their interests will stand higher than communication with their fathers, and if this communication exists, then from three to ten seconds a day, and some won't have it at all.

Our world has many material values that cannot be acquired in one's entire short life. And a beautiful life costs big money, which cannot be earned very quickly and sufficiently. Yes, we need to work, we need to earn something and somehow pay for life in this world, but this shouldn't take the main place and become the goal and meaning of life. And to understand what should be most valuable and important, it's enough to ask the question, can this be taken with you to Heaven. And determining this becomes very simple. Can I take my children to Heaven? Yes, and bring them to God and say: "Here am I and the children whom the Lord gave me!" (Isa. 8:18). Can I take my character to Heaven? Yes, but it should be holy and righteous and reflect Jesus. Can I take all my things and money to Heaven? Why would they be needed there? There will be other values there, friendship and love will be valued there, and payment for all services will be made with these very treasures.

Many busy fathers will justify their busyness and constant absence from the family by saying they work for the children's benefit, so they have everything and feel good. But children don't need these benefits, they need papa and his time. But since father arranges priorities this way, then let it be so. Only the harvest of such sowing will be very bitter.

Now our children don't need so much. When they are a priority, then it's not so important to them how much time we spend playing with them and what we play with them. They know that we are available to them at any time and they can always get from us what their young hearts so need. Children need fathers. And no matter how busy these people are, for any child papa is the dearest person. If papa died, that's inevitability that must

be accepted, but if he's alive and he's not there, or he's unavailable, then no one and nothing will replace him.

There's good news also in that the Heavenly Father can make up for the absence of an earthly father and give much more, but the child's soul still needs papa, with whom you can spend time and have dialogue. Children don't have so much wisdom to express all their need for father's presence and significance for them, therefore they silently accept what they have, and build their life values where there's no papa.

The role of father in the family, his influence, his instructions and authority are very important in the matter of personality education. They say there are no irreplaceable people. Family is that place where there's no one better or similar to your place. You are irreplaceable here. And this should be remembered and understood. But if this isn't clear to the father, then who can convey this to him? Maybe this lesson will change something in the consciousness of the reading or listening father? How many millions is your child's awakening worth? Is this money really more important to you than the one given to you by God forever? God knows our needs and cares for us even in the most difficult time, but even He cannot replace us in our families.

The boomerang of relationships will definitely return. What we sow, we will reap.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Gal. 6:7; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Tim. 6:10; Prov. 22:8; Hosea 8:7; 10:12; Mal. 4:5-6; 1 Tim. 3:4-5, 12-13; 5:8; Matt. 6:24; 1 John 2:15-17; Luke 1:17; 6:31, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What role does the father play in raising children?
5. How does fathers' busyness affect their influence on their children?
6. Do you know about the problem described in the lesson not by hearsay?
7. Why do many fathers think more about earthly things than about raising their children?

8. How can a person understand the true value of relationships between children and parents?
9. Should we be surprised by children's indifference to parents when one showed indifference to children?
10. Do you think the message from Mal. 4:5-6 relates to our time?
11. Doesn't the story about the sons of high priest Eli and those sad consequences with which everything ended alarm you? Read 1 Sam. 2:12-17,22-25; 3:13-14; 4:11,18.
12. Will a child learn communication with father if father avoids this?
13. Should fathers, before they have children, think about whether they can give them a papa?
14. If you didn't have a father with a living father, should you deprive your children of their father?

## The Influence of God's Word

The Bible is a collection of written messages and revelations from people led by God's Spirit. It is also commonly called the Holy Scripture or the Word of God. This Sacred Book contains important information about the Master of our world. Through it, the Holy Spirit reveals to the reader the true beauty of God's character, the holiness of God's law, the power of God's love, God's plan for our Salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and gives many other useful pieces of advice and instructions for the righteous and happy life of a believing person.

The Bible records very many direct commands from God, which were spoken by the Lord Himself and carry within them a certain message for every reader and listener, in whatever era they may live.

Small children cannot read, but they have very good memory, and they can easily memorize biblical verses, and when necessary, entire chapters.

I remember one case when the son of my friends named Sasha saw a Bible at my place in a leather binding with gold edges and was enchanted by such unique design of the Sacred Book. I, seeing his interest, asked him whether he would like to have such a Bible as his own property. He answered positively, thinking that I would give it to him right away. But I told this young man that he could receive such a Bible as a gift if in a month he would recite the Epistle of James to me from memory. He agreed.

A month later we met again and gathered at Sasha's family home, where everyone together decided to listen to what our little friend had learned. I took out a new Bible and opened it to the right place. All those present in the house did the same. Sasha stood in the middle of the room and began to quote the Epistle of James from memory, moving from chapter to chapter. He sometimes stumbled from excitement, and I would prompt him with the beginning of the next verse, and he would immediately continue quoting it from memory. To the joy of all

present, Sasha quickly coped with retelling the memorized text and looked longingly at the coveted gift. I stood up and solemnly presented this young man with a new Bible, which he accepted with special joy and reverence and immediately opened it with shining eyes to the place that was known only to him, and began to eagerly read what was written in it. And I observed the childish joy and dreamed about how wonderful it would be if all our children would thus thirst to have their personal Bibles and receive them under such conditions.

The Bible is not an ordinary book, but the living Word of God Himself, and He observes how we relate to this Holy Scripture, how we take the Bible in our hands, how we live according to what is written.

Children are very attentive in their observation of their parents' behavior. They try to imitate father and mother in everything, and they learn to relate to household items as it is accepted in their home. And they take this example from the life of father and mother.

Parents need to take the family Bible in their hands with special reverence and carefully keep it in their home, allocating an honorable place for it and teaching children to relate to this Sacred Book with similar reverence.

An important rule that all family members should observe is that no other books should ever lie on the Bible, and especially cell phones, even if someone simultaneously holds both these items in their hands. We are talking about the paper version that is kept at home as the Book of books. Such an attitude evokes a feeling of special reverence for the holiness of Holy Scripture in all family members, and it extends accordingly to the Author of this Sacred Book, which is very pleasing to God.

The Bible should not become an object of worship, but should evoke respect and special attitude through its external appearance.

If it stands in a cabinet or on a shelf, this should be a special place intended only for it. Under no circumstances should this Book be thrown or used as a stand for something, sat upon or

have feet put on it. The Bible should always lie separately or on top of everything. Such cultivation of reverence is part of the parents' task. Accordingly, they should first learn this themselves in their personal, and then family life.

Angels, who constantly guard us and our homes, will be pleased to see reverent attitude toward God's Word and create a sacred atmosphere around this book. Children taught in this way to honor Holy Scripture will notice how carelessly other people relate to this, but their children should be taught to monitor themselves and their attitude toward Sacred objects and not succumb to worldly influence.

When opening the pages of the Bible at family meetings, the father or mother needs to make it a rule to pray for blessing on reading this Book and ask for God's guidance for correct understanding of what is written. The Lord especially responds to such prayers and gives His grace to all listeners. Let this attitude become a good family tradition.

Outside the home it is also worth maintaining respectful reverence for the Bible, but there is no need to demonstrate your separateness in this matter if the people around you do not understand your reverence, but you should not conform to generally accepted norms either.

But the most important thing is not only respectful attitude toward the Book of books, but also the same respect and reverence for the Author of this Book and for fulfilling God's will. There will be little benefit if children and parents use the Bible as a talisman and always keep it closed, not being interested in the contents. Their reverence will not bring them light and will not make them suitable for Eternity.

Let us read the appeal recorded in Isaiah 66:5: "Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at his word..." Already at that time there were people who trembled upon hearing God's word. When I understand Who is addressing me through the words of Holy Scripture, then my heart trembles not only before the Word, but also from the awareness of Who stands behind this Word.

God's Word has creative power to create something new in a person's heart, to create something beautiful out of nothing. It is sent for the purpose of accomplishing the will of the One who sent it.

Do not be afraid to instill in your children love for the Bible. This Word of God will change much in their lives for the better and create something new in their hearts. And if a young mind opens to the influence of God's words, then these words will accomplish in the child's life that for which they were sent. The seed of life sown in a child's heart will surely sprout.

Parents need to learn one more rule. God's Word should not become a scourge of punishment for their children, which they will have to read or listen to if they do something wrong. Also, children should not be accustomed to reading the Bible for encouragement or gifts. The Lord does not accept such worship and cannot bless it.

Father and mother need to accustom children so that meeting with the Bible becomes the most pleasant home ritual, in which children would gladly participate not as listeners, but also as readers, thinkers and discoverers.

God will surely bless those homes where all family members gather together in a spirit of love to reflect and learn truths from God's Word. And every guest of this home will feel the atmosphere of God's presence at this time.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm 137:2; 118:49-50, 74, 81, 89, 105; John 5:39; Acts 17:11-12; John 7:14-15; in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your memory?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What role does the Bible play in forming a child's character?
5. Should the Bible be a special book in your home?
6. Is it necessary to ensure that all family members respectfully relate to the Book of books?
7. At what moment does the Bible stop being God's Word and become a talisman?

8. From what age can children read the Bible?
9. Why is it always necessary to pray before reading the Bible and ask for wisdom in understanding what is written and for the presence of the Holy Spirit?
10. What to do if I do not pray before opening the Bible for reading?
11. Do you think the Lord will convey to a child's consciousness the meaning of Biblical narratives that parents read to them?
12. Can children be given audio-Bible for independent listening?
13. Is a child's mind capable of understanding and appreciating the full depth of Holy Scripture?
14. Should we worry that if the Bible will not be understandable to small children?

## **"Guys, Let's Live in Friendship!"**

In Soviet times, a cartoon was released for children and adults about how two little mice tried to harm Leopold the cat, and this cat turned all their attacks into peace and friendliness. And even when Leopold lost his temper and decided to punish the hooligans, in the end, he came to peace and made the proposal: "Guys, let's live in friendship!" This phrase became the motto of friendship throughout the country, and it carries within itself a special philosophy, teaching that the strong always have power and enough strength to catch and punish the guilty, but they desire while doing this to live in friendship with everyone and show undeserved mercy to disturbers of peace, manifesting infinite patience and a friendly spirit.

Something similar happens in families where children, by their innate fleshly nature, sometimes do such strange things that they were not taught at home and which bewilder parents so much that they become confused, trying to understand where this came from.

We do not know what forces of evil and temptations our small children encounter in their imagination and in their experiences. They are not taught to distinguish good from evil, and therefore they are prone to commit evil acts without understanding that they are doing evil.

For example, in some families after the birth of the first child follows the appearance of the second, and there is a small age difference between these children, which multiplies parental efforts in their upbringing many times over. The older child is not taught to love their younger relative, and in a surge of feelings incomprehensible to them, they may show inadequacy in behavior and inexplicable cruelty. And they do this not intentionally, but yielding to an internal impulse that they have not yet learned to recognize and control. Therefore, it is the duty of mother and father to keep their children under constant observation and instill in them rules of worthy behavior toward each other.

Children quickly learn what they are constantly instructed in. They remember and assimilate what they often hear and what they periodically do, and this subsequently becomes part of their habit and character. Good and correct manners do not appear in children's nature by themselves. For their development, constant visual example and thoughtful instruction are needed. And this should come from parents and older mentors.

If you do not have trusting relationships with your children, this is the fault of parents, not children. Children do not know how to build trust with adults, but they willingly enter into this when they are given conditions and their natural response to trusting closeness is not ignored.

Many parents, while their children are small, do not even think about whether they have trusting relationships with their children. Adults fulfill their duties of feeding, dressing, walking their offspring. To teach children something and keep them occupied, they buy them many games and toys, put a personal computer or television in their room, give them smartphones, make sure that the little ones are not too noisy in the presence of adults, and then, when a teenager appears in their house, they suddenly wonder where this "monster" came from. And they run for advice "what to do?" to a psychologist, who also cannot fix anything, but tries to explain that their children have entered another phase of development, and this just needs to be survived.

There is good news that at any age you can win your child's trust if you understand what this is, where my mistakes are and what I need to do, and what not to do, following in the right direction. Children are attached to their, even very bad, parents and are ready to forgive and forget much, just to receive what they so lacked in childhood. If parents cannot give children the love that young hearts so need, then children will go looking for it on the street, entrusting themselves to strangers' hands, seeing in each new friend that coveted source of inspiration, and each time being disappointed and experiencing another deception of their expectations.

The world cannot give your children what you have, parents. And the sooner you begin to build this connection, the easier it will be for you and your children to grow and develop in such relationships. And you yourselves will learn much.

In the best scenario, father and mother should have equally trusting relationships with their child, exchanging information received from each other, and the child should know that they have no secrets with mom from dad or with dad from mom. After all, they are one family in which there is trust and mutual respect for each other. Children joyfully accept such rules and naturally develop in such relationships.

If a child asks mother not to tell dad about their misdeed, it is necessary to definitely find out the reason for such fear and explain that this is deception and undermining of trust, which mother cannot go along with. But this works only in those relationships where father also adequately relates to the child's misdeeds, not manifesting a dictatorial spirit.

Study your relationships with children. If there is no trust in them, you will immediately understand and see this. And building these relationships must begin with yourself. But how? Only with God's help.

The Heavenly Father is also our Father and desires to have trusting relationships with us. He, from His side, is the most ideal parent with the wisest approach to us. His love and will are open, and He waits for His prodigal sons and daughters so that when they come to themselves and want to return to Him, He will run to meet them and, having compassion, fall on their neck and kiss them (Luke 15:20). The Lord loves those for whom He gave His beloved Son, to return to Himself what was lost.

God accepts everyone and teaches us good things. He desires to see our families happy and children obedient. He has enough Heavenly gold of love to enrich our families with it.

Be ready for the fact that you will have to face natural childish egoism, with inadequacy in the behavior of little ones, with a rebellious spirit that will sometimes get out of control of the

child's will. This is a normal working process that should not be feared. However, you need to be fully armed, ready to meet everything with love and conquer with love.

The call for friendly relationships appeals to all children. Although they are egoists by nature, they are at the same time not against changing and learning something better.

God's way is the best way. Although it may initially cause a storm of protests from young creatures, subsequently, having been taught righteousness, they will be very happy under the protection of God's principles governing their lives. And the proposal to "live in friendship" will always be accepted with joy and eagerness.

Remember that all people, regardless of country of residence and culture, desire to live peacefully, in love and friendship. This program is embedded in every heart, and your children are no exception to this rule. Although the enemy of souls has deceived many, slipping them other values, God's plan will always be a priority when you begin to implement it in your family and in your environment. Children unconsciously wait for those whom they can trust, and you, father and mother, become these people for them, and wonderful prospects of a happy future will open before you.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Matthew 6:14-15; 7:12; 10:22; Ephesians 4:31-32; 5:1-2; Romans 12:8-10; Colossians 3:14; James 1:4; Luke 6:36 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your memory?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Explain why children may have "inadequacy in behavior" toward younger brothers/sisters.
5. How should parents react to inadequate behavior of children and what needs to be done in this case?
6. Why is it important for parents and children to have trusting relationships?
7. What happens when children do not have trusting relationships with parents?

8. How can parents win their children's trust if there was none before?
9. Why is it important for father and mother to have equally trusting relationships with the child?
10. How can God help parents in building trusting relationships with children?
11. Why are children, despite egoism, still ready to change and learn something better?
12. Explain why "God's way is the best way" in raising children.
13. How can the proposal "Guys, let's live in friendship!" be accepted by children?
14. Why do all people in the world, regardless of country and culture, want to live in peace and friendship?

## Spiritual Filter

The life of a believing person in this world is full of all kinds of trials and blessings. We live in the midst of evil, and this evil exerts stable influence on everyone living on earth. And it does not go anywhere. Our families are also subjected to attacks by the enemy of souls, who desires to establish his banner in the hearts of those who out of curiosity or by their own desire enter his territory. And it is bad to be alone when you fall and there is no one to lift you up, or when someone, having fallen themselves, drags along with them those who live with them in safety.

Children of believing people are the coveted prey of the enemy of souls, and he tirelessly walks around their homes, setting all kinds of traps and devising various temptations to steal, kill and destroy, if possible, even the chosen ones.

Parents need, as much as it is in their power, to keep small children with them and build such close trusting relationships that the child would consider it a rule to share everything that happens to them, what they experience and what they learn.

Parents are not robots who can tirelessly serve their child. They also get tired and become so mentally exhausted that they impatiently wait for the time when their child goes to sleep, just to sit and do nothing, and think about nothing.

The Lord knows what mothers experience and what they face while caring for children. He hears all their prayers for their sons and daughters and for each new day gives the weary soul strength to work and conquer.

Raising a child is not only parental responsibility, but also direct participation of all Heavenly invisible forces in the lives of children and their parents.

Some parents do not send their children to kindergartens and prefer to form the child's personality themselves. But the time comes when according to the law of the country children need to go to school, and parents are forced to place their children in

secular educational institutions. They have no chance to avoid this event.

About 500 years ago, at the dawn of the reformation, enemies of God's people sought opportunities to oppose this movement, and they came up with the idea of taking upon themselves the right to educate the rising generation, putting into children's minds what would turn young consciousness away from truth and make it an ally of dark forces. They even made a motto: "Give us your children and believe in what you want."

How we would wish that at each of our churches there was its own school with God-fearing and wise teachers and educators. But we have a different picture and see how the plans of the enemies of reformation are successfully implemented in our days everywhere.

Trusting relationships built in early childhood and faith in God help parents not to give up, but to do everything possible to preserve their child's soul in purity and holiness. When a child understands from childhood whose they are and has personal relationships with Jesus, then it will be easier for them to resist all those temptations they will have to encounter in life.

When sending their children to "Egyptian schools," having no other alternative, parents should establish a "spiritual filter" in their family and ask the young student to tell them everything they experienced during the day, what new words and expressions they had never heard from their parents they learned, and what knowledge they received.

For a child who is accustomed to trusting you, it will not be difficult to share with you all that vinaigrette of godless expressions they will hear from their peers. Be ready to hear from the pure lips of your son or daughter the most obscene expressions, the meaning of which they may not even understand. Do not scold your child for their sincerity, but having listened to their "revelations," begin to explain what is bad and what is good. It is better for you to become a teacher of good and evil than to allow someone else to do this.

The opinion and point of view of loving parents will always be a priority for the child. And when they hear from you that bad words are no good and unacceptable in your home, then it will be easy for them to make this opinion their own and carry it through their entire life.

At the very beginning of the school path, it is very important for parents to know everything their child learns and give their assessment of what is happening and what is heard. It is worth bringing biblical verses into your conversations that support parents' opinion and explain that God is an Opponent of evil forces and will keep all who walk in straight paths of righteousness.

Children should understand that you love them and wish them happiness and success in everything. And this is not difficult to show them when your heart is overflowing with this love.

New education will give your children new friends who will influence their worldview in new ways. It is worth understanding what influence these friends have on your child and in trusting conversations give those instructions that you will consider correct.

Jesus prayed for us thus: "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from evil" John 17:15. God knows how dangerous our world is, but He sends us into it and keeps us from evil. Pray in the same way for your children, and the Lord will apply His hand and give you strength and wisdom.

Many parents, having the opportunity to educate children at home, fear that their offspring will be deficient, unadapted to life in the world and easily wounded beings. Where do such fears come from? From none other than the enemy of souls. The longer children live under the influence of God's forces, the stronger and wiser they become to resist all evil. The Bible gives us such examples: Joseph in Egypt, Daniel and his companions in Babylon.

All your lessons of goodness and holiness, all biblical principles put into the child's mind and heart, will guide your children in

making decisions throughout their subsequent life. The spiritual filter that parents establish in early childhood will successfully filter out all filth until the child's old age, and the Lord will help children in this at all times.

Young years are the most important for strengthening spiritual immunity. And let your fears be directed toward how not to create additional temptations for the child's soul by sending them where they could have avoided being sent.

If state laws allow you to keep your children with you and educate them at home, then take advantage of this benefit for the good of your children, finding them wise and God-fearing teachers, and you will reap a good harvest.

If there is a Christian school near you about which there are good reviews from God-fearing parents, then you can use this advantage too, remembering that even in such schools worldly children study, whose influence must be understood and filtered.

God's people are the strongest people, even if they are still children. It will not be the world influencing them, but they will influence their entire environment. Having taught a child to have personal relationships with Christ, you will make your child an impregnable bastion against which all worldly temptations and winds of teaching will be shattered.

Preparing missionaries from children, you will see that this is possible, and already during your lifetime you will taste the good fruit of such upbringing. Do not be afraid to keep your children from evil. The purer your trusting relationships are, the purer children's lives will be.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Proverbs 1:10; 4:23; 22:6; 89:12; Ephesians 6:1,4; Psalm 1:1-3; 31:8; 120:5; 126:1; Isaiah 40:30-31; 1 Corinthians 15:33; John 8:32, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your memory?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?

4. What is a "spiritual filter" and how to establish it in the family?
5. How should parents react to "bad words" that children learn at school?
6. What role do biblical verses play in conversations with children?
7. Why did Jesus pray this way according to John 17:15? What does this expression teach us?
8. Why do some parents fear educating children at home?
9. Why are young years important for strengthening spiritual immunity?
10. What alternatives to state schools do you know?
11. What makes children of believers an "impregnable bastion"?
12. What advantages does home education provide?
13. Why is it important to explain to children the difference between good and evil?
14. What is the role of personal relationships with Christ in a child's life?

## Sinful Characteristics of a Child

Every person at birth inherits by inheritance a fleshly nature that is initially inclined toward sin and exerts great influence on the mind and consciousness. This innate nature is called that very flesh with which there is constant struggle of a person's spirit, which desires to live righteously, according to law, observing all God's commandments. God gives believers in Him strength to successfully resist sinful nature, but not everyone wants to have this strength.

Our children are no exception to this great struggle, and they also need strength from above to overcome their fleshly inclinations. But their problem is that they do not understand the difference between good and evil, and it is natural for them to live as they are taught and as their feelings suggest to them.

When observing the behavior of little ones, it is worth understanding how they behave and what governs them. All of them are by nature egocentric and somewhat willful, and this should not be feared, and they should not be punished for this. Proper upbringing in love and faith in God suppresses fleshly inclinations and does not allow sin to dominate over the child's will. Parents should liken themselves to a wise doctor who, having a sick patient, does not fight with the symptoms of the disease, but tries to establish the cause that provoked this illness and eliminate it.

In the lives of little ones who behave not as you would like, you can also calculate from whom they take example and what they look at. They do not yet have experience to invent vice for themselves and do what is considered bad. But it is natural for them to copy what is before their eyes and produce what they absorb into themselves. If the problem is identified, then you need to look for the cause, which may be either in the parents themselves or in the environment with which your child maintains relationships.

It is characteristic for a little one to reflect in their behavior what they see. They cannot invent bad things, and if they did

something accidentally and do not repeat this action anymore, then there is no need to concentrate on this.

Infants do not yet have a strong neural connection between the two hemispheres of the brain that are responsible for controlling the body, mind and emotions, and therefore they cannot concentrate on one thing for long and bring started work to completion. But through constant instruction and repetition, they develop certain habits that subsequently form their character.

Sinfulness and vice are different things that should not be generalized and confused. Sinfulness is unconscious choice and unintentional bad behavior that may be caused by internal physical or emotional imbalance, or immaturity of the little one, or searching for boundaries, or repetition of a seen example that has not yet become a habit.

Vice is a more stable habit of bad behavior that is considered in culture to be sinful, dangerous or harmful. As a rule, this is a conscious choice that a child makes due to a formed lifestyle. At an early stage of growth, while the child does not realize the harmfulness of their bad behavior, everything is much more easily correctable, because this has not become their habit, and they understand what they are doing and want to do it.

The mood of each of us depends on hormonal changes in the organism, and children are no exception to this rule. They quickly fall into hormonal dependence if parents do not understand the strength of this influence.

Example - consumption of artificial sweets during meals. When sugar contacts the tongue, the hormone dopamine is produced, which reports that there is something tasty and unusual in the mouth. This taste is associated with the external appearance of the sweet product, and the child remembers the experienced pleasure, name and appearance of this dish. Next time their glance or familiar word triggers dopamine production, and the little one naturally asks for what tastes good to them, not understanding how harmful or beneficial it is. And if it were their will, they would eat only candies and chocolate. And there

is no fault of the child in this. Their mind is not yet capable of analyzing these processes and resisting them, therefore parents need special wisdom to better not give children what can spoil their taste, just for the sake of a momentary joy of the child to make them a dependent sweet tooth.

At an older age, when children understand what is good and what is bad, they can be explained the benefits and harm of artificial sweets and observe what they will have more preference for. The struggle with perverted appetite is not only a children's problem, but also grief for many adults, and the roots of this vice are laid in early childhood at the family table.

Small children are prone to scatter everything and not clean up after themselves, whine and be tearful, show laziness and refuse household duties, abandon one task and take up another, be slow and sluggish, take offense and sulk, show greed, be cruel to other children and animals, rebel and get angry, make noise and shout, and do much else that can bewilder parents. If such things happen at an early age, this is easily correctable, but when a child understands that this should not be done and does it anyway, this is already serious. The task of father and mother includes instilling in children opposite, good, qualities of soul and raising in young creatures those virtues that will make them suitable for Heaven.

Lack of sleep, overwork, overeating, indigestion, fear, offense, irritation and other things can become the cause of disobedience or bad behavior of a child. Parents should understand the real problem that provokes their child to evil before making a verdict and taking measures.

There is no need to measure the behavior of little ones by adult standards and expect from them conscious obedience as is accepted at the age of majority. A child should be a child both in their behavior and in the eyes of parents, and they need to be judged not by years, but by intellect and characteristics that are inherent to the stage of their development. Some children mature and understand everything quickly, while others need more time to learn simple rules and develop good habits.

It is important to check the child's vision and make sure it is normal and they can distinguish colors. A little one cannot tell you that they see poorly. They simply have nothing to compare this with, and parents may decide that they deliberately do not orient themselves in space and do not pay attention to many things.

Our world is full of all kinds of diseases both spiritual and physical. Check your children with specialists for mental and emotional stability and integrity. It is possible that they have congenital deviations from the norm, and these are special children who require special treatment. You should not expect from them what is customarily expected.

Unfortunately, many children inherit the consequences of sins of their predecessors and occult connections of their ancestors to the third and fourth generation. The enemy of souls can demand payment for his services from parents and their descendants. Faith in Jesus and prayer of renunciation destroys this generational curse, but consequences of sin may be passed to children in the form of some disease or physical defect. All this requires a special approach in upbringing and wisdom.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Psalm 50:7; Genesis 4:6-7; 8:21; Romans 3:23; Galatians 5:17-18; Colossians 3:21; Exodus 20:5; Proverbs 1:8; 12:15; 15:1; 16:32; 17:6; 19:18; Job 5:17; James 1:17, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your memory?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What is fleshly nature?
5. How does the influence of fleshly nature manifest in a person?
6. Why can't children always distinguish good from evil?
7. Where do children get examples of bad behavior from?
8. What is the difference between sinfulness and vice?
9. What is vice in the context of child behavior?
10. How does hormonal dependence form in children using the example of sweets?

11. Why is it important to control the consumption of artificial sweets at an early age?
12. What typical manifestations of bad behavior are characteristic of small children?
13. What factors can become the cause of a child's disobedience?
14. Why shouldn't children's behavior be measured by adult standards?

## Motive or Result?

Children are small people born into this world to learn everything that is customary to do in this world and how it is customary to live. They absorb everything they come into contact with, what they see and hear, what they study and learn. The task of parents includes teaching these small beings, caring for them and their needs, raising them within certain frameworks and boundaries until the age when they become independent and can take care of themselves and their environment.

Children are intelligent beings who have their own will, their own analytical mindset, their own life approach to many life situations. Since no responsibility is placed on them, they are not prone to stress and worries about many issues. But parents should understand that when dealing with a thinking person, they are dealing with a child who still thinks childishly and understands everything in a childish way.

Many childhood mistakes may seem to adults like intentional rebellion or malicious sin, and a corresponding reaction of parents arises, in which they put forward serious demands to their child, believing that they are smart enough not to unconsciously do such things. But if a child is small, then for them many expectations of adults are not justified, and they simply cannot understand what is wanted from them.

The call to behave well sounds understandable, but the little one does not understand why daddy's "good" is better than their "good," and tries to please with all their might, and in response hears shouting and threats of punishment.

For example, a five-year-old son was left at home as the one in charge, and he decided to wash the floor in the house to please his parents with cleanliness. Without thinking long and consulting with his younger sister, the young cleaner decided to pour several buckets of water and a bottle of cleaning agent onto the parquet. He tried with all his heart, and not one corner remained unwashed. The sister ran around the apartment with

a mop, rejoicing at how everything shone, and anticipating the happiness of the parents. The motive of these young creatures was most beautiful, but the result of their labor did not please mom very much and horrified dad with the swollen floor. We can imagine the continuation of such "cleaning," but the motive was beautiful.

All parents, one way or another, will experience something similar, and here it is important to prepare your heart in advance to be slow to words of condemnation or anger. If you are an emotional person and an explosion of emotions in you can get out of control, then try to arrange it so that no one suffers from the fragments of your indignation and is not disappointed in their "disservice" from a pure heart. If you punish the innocent culprits of such an incident or decide to conduct an explanatory conversation, you will still have to bear material losses. But try to ensure that your relationships with children remain trusting, friendly and whole. This is very difficult, but remember that something can be destroyed and broken much faster than built and created. This does not require intelligence and wisdom.

In many countries there are laws that impose material and legal responsibility on parents for inadequate behavior of their children. And if you take a similar situation and consider it within the framework of law, then parents who left their children without supervision will be considered guilty of causing damage. But in their own eyes parents are always right or can blame each other for oversight, which can destroy good marital relationships.

Parents need to distinguish those motives and actions of children that are done out of immaturity from those that are committed by internal inclination toward evil. If sinful motives are traced in a child, then parents need to take urgent measures to eradicate such a spirit. But when a child invests the best motives and in the end gets a sad result, then with all my sympathy for parents I want to wish them to grit their teeth, smile and inwardly pray for wisdom from above and a way out of the current situation.

Let us give an opposite situation as an example. Mom asked her son to wash the floor while she went to the store. The son reluctantly left his games and, muttering to himself, took up cleaning the house, complaining to all household members about a difficult childhood and cruel exploitation of child labor. In the end, the cleaning was done in the best way. The mother, entering the house, was very glad for the clean floors and wiped dust. A part of routine work was taken off her, for which she thanked the displeased son. In the evening, coming home, father also praised the young helper, rejoicing at how skillfully the son copes with such work. And the motive with which this work was performed interested few people.

The motive in one matter or another, like the action, has the ability to take root in the child's consciousness and become their habit. Correcting evil motives to good ones happens much more difficultly and longer than vice versa.

If the most decent child is placed in bad company, then after some time they too will become bad. And if a bad child is placed in a good collective, then it is quite possible that this good collective will learn many bad things, and the evil child will not become kinder. For good changes in the heart, a good environment is not always effective, but conversion will inevitably occur under the influence of good mentors who, understanding whom they are dealing with, will apply all efforts, all their wisdom and all their authority to wean a spoiled child from doing evil and teach them to love good things and principles.

Parents are given authority from God to create from children entrusted to them what they want or decide to have in their home, and as a rule, children are inclined to obey strict parents.

But a good result from under the stick or with a bad motive is not good fruit in the eyes of Heaven. Just as a good result with a good motive, but contradicting God's will and principles, is not the path of good.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil has a good word in its name, but one who tastes from it is doomed to death.

Jesus taught that those who know the truth will become truly free (John 8:32). And in this knowledge of truth spouses find wisdom from above. And if mutual love of parents is added to this knowledge, then they will naturally pass these knowledge and skills to their children both through personal example of relationships and through wise influence in meek and strict instruction.

Children, as a rule, consider it fair when loving parents reveal their wrong motives and begin to instruct them on the true path with correct thinking. But how painful it is for them to experience that their correct motives are trampled into mud with shouting and punished for what they did wrong or produced a bad result out of all their sincere love!

Having a child is a very expensive matter that can become excessively expensive if there is no parental control over this miracle. But despite all this, we want to have these expensive children, and they become so valuable to us that the question of their value is not even considered. They are infinitely dear and irreplaceable for every father and mother.

And let your attitude toward the child's motives in their correct or fruitless behavior be wise and objective.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Ecclesiastes 11:9-10; Jonah 4:11; Numbers 14:18; Proverbs 14:12; 15:1,20; 1 Corinthians 13:4; Psalm 31:8; James 1:20; Ephesians 6:1,4; Hebrews 12:11; in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your memory?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Why is a good result achieved under coercion not good fruit? Galatians 5:22-23.
5. Why is it important to consider children's motives for actions, and not only their result?
6. How to distinguish children's actions committed out of immaturity from actions committed with evil intent?
7. What to do if a child, out of love for you, spoiled your good things?

8. Why is it important to maintain trusting relationships with children even after their misdeeds? Proverbs 4:23.
9. How to find balance between strictness and love in upbringing?
10. Why is it important to be slow to words of condemnation or anger?
11. Why is raising a child an expensive undertaking?
12. How to properly react to children's "disservices"?
13. What to do if evil emotions about a child's behavior overflow your heart?
14. Do you think it will be easier to endure trials of your property being damaged by your children if you prepare for this in advance?

## Domestic Animals

Many families, in addition to children, also get themselves domestic animals. Whether this is good or bad is difficult to say, but it should be taken into account that this decision adds additional responsibility, expenses, and troubles to family life, while bringing much joy, interesting experiences, and discoveries. And whatever anyone may say, despite all the pros and cons, there will always be those who believe that the presence of animals in the home is a beneficial influence and additional joy.

God first created living beings: fish, birds, beasts according to their kind. He placed these creatures in natural environmental conditions and gave them the plant world as food. Now we see how many animals have become predatory and carnivorous, and their claws and teeth have become dangerous tools of defense and attack.

When it comes to domestic animals, we immediately imagine cats and dogs. These types of pets are most popular and widespread in the European region. Many owners keep them in their living spaces, and some even allow them into their bedroom or bed.

To understand what is best for animals, it's worth returning to the primary source. The natural habitat of any living beings is open space and natural conditions. When these creatures end up in artificial structures and begin to eat artificial food, then their natural needs are limited by forced conditions, which can provoke a mass of unexpected diseases and ailments that the animals will not tell you about.

It should also be noted that beasts that walk on paws are called unclean animals in the Bible (Lev. 11:27). Unclean means created for a specific purpose in the natural habitat, but certainly not for the bed.

There are studies showing that these animals have specific odors and vapors from their bodies that are harmful to people's breathing, especially in unventilated rooms, which can cause

allergic reactions in their owners or provoke many hidden diseases. These risks should be considered and all pros and cons weighed before getting anyone.

Domestic animals can also include fish, birds, chickens, cows, goats, and sheep, which many also have in their household. The presence of all these speechless creatures in the lives of adults and children is an additional illustration of God's love, His creative power, wisdom, and ability to decorate His creation with extraordinary colors, forms, and character. God made everything beautiful. And if we begin to study God's creation, observe their habits, examine what they are clothed in and how they are able to adapt to different weather, then you are amazed at what a huge world for research opens up to you.

Cats and dogs are popular with all people not only for their furry appearance, but also because they can give us their sincere feelings of love, tenderness and affection, show their loyalty and humility, demonstrate forgiveness and attachment. They don't scold their owners, don't quarrel with them, don't demand money from them, but quietly wait for someone to take care of them, and are ready to sacrifice themselves to save their elder brothers in reason. Although the Lord did not give animals reason and the ability to communicate, sometimes it seems that they understand you.

For a child, the presence of animals in the house is special joy and the most beloved "toy" that has its own character and which must be reckoned with, and whose views on life must be respected.

I do not recommend that you get domestic pets and take on additional responsibility, but if you already have them, then use their presence as a visual aid for studying their habits, behavior patterns, physical structure, instincts, and all those hidden qualities of their features that were laid by the Creator in these sweet creatures. Open the world of animals for yourself and your children so they study their internal structure, what they can and cannot be fed, what they get sick with, and how long they live.

Essentially, domestic animals become part of your family and attach your hearts and emotions to themselves. It may turn out that you begin to love them more than your neighbors, and in this light I want to wish you that your good feelings would also be directed toward those who are equal to you in reason and whom the Lord commanded to love.

All your pets have one common defect that you will definitely experience - this is the short duration of their life. They live 7-8 times less than people, and the last years of their life cause them much suffering from those internal diseases and ailments that they have.

It is written in Prov. 12:10: "A righteous man cares for the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." Your righteousness before God will be visible not only to members of your family, but also to your animals, and be assured that they will be the most grateful beings for your care of them.

Sanitary health reform extends not only to people, but should also affect your pets. They also want to be healthy and have a certain regime of nutrition, cleanliness, and rest. All the same laws operate in their lives too.

Children must be taught to care for their younger friends, brush their fur daily, feed them at the appointed time with proper food, monitor the cleanliness of their resting place, walk them in a timely manner if necessary, and do what the animals require in relation to themselves.

I know such cases when children asked to buy them a little dog and, until they received their cherished dream, promised to do everything and even more than that. But when this animal appeared in their home, after a couple of weeks the parents understood that another care was placed on their shoulders that was beyond their children's strength. And the dog quickly determines who in the family is its master and prefers to give its very best feelings to him and honor him above others.

Dogs are also unique in that they can be trained and made to do what will bring special benefit and joy to their owners. Their

amazing scent, hearing, perceptiveness, fearlessness can become a good help for people in guarding and securing their property and life. But they cannot always be taken on long journeys, and not everywhere are there conditions for accepting them. As a result, they attach owners to themselves and do not allow them to simply leave them unattended for a long time. This should also be taken into account.

The Bible tells that on the New Earth there will be many different animals that will play with children. But it does not teach that we should get these creatures in our home. Here everyone should decide for themselves, but so that it is safe for your life and health. There is a general rule. If your pet bites or scratches, or shows aggression toward the one who cares for it or lives with you, then it is dangerous and cannot be left at home, but it is necessary to get rid of it. Wild animals such as bears, lions, wolves, tigers, and others are not even discussed. They cannot live with people because they represent mortal danger. There are also breeds of dogs that statistically are considered very dangerous and unpredictable in their habits. Study this question before acquiring anything.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Job 12:7-9; Gen. 1:20-25,28; Isa. 11:6-7; Matt. 6:26; Eccl. 3:21; Prov. 6:6-8; 12:10; Rom. 8:19; 2 Sam. 12:2-6, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your memory?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Did you have domestic animals? If yes, then share this experience.
5. What additional responsibilities appear in the family when domestic animals appear?
6. What is the natural habitat for animals?
7. Why can artificial keeping conditions be harmful to animals?
8. What influence can domestic animals have on raising children?
9. Should children be taught that domestic animals are not toys?

10. How can sanitary reform and health laws be connected with your pets?
11. Should other families be forbidden to have domestic animals?
12. What can domestic or wild animals teach us, according to Job 12:7-9?
13. What harm can domestic animals bring?
14. Is having other living beings in the house, besides children, bad?

## Children's Activity

If we carefully look at how the animal world is arranged, we will notice a characteristic feature. It consists in the fact that all young creatures possess incredible physical activity and inexhaustible energy, which they splash out of themselves without any visible benefit. And their parents at the same time behave more sedately and calmly.

Those who have had young kittens or puppies know how they love to play and how restless they are in their games. And if we take cubs of any predatory beast, we will notice that they are all quite active despite all their clumsiness and very quickly and skillfully develop hunting habits characteristic of their kind.

The Creator laid certain laws of growth and development into the nature of all living beings, and our children are no exception to these rules.

A healthy child is a mobile child. And a mobile child is a healthy child. After birth, infants spend much time sleeping, and when awake, they eat and learn about the new world surrounding them. This little creature already begins its physical activity through jerking its little hands and feet, lifting its head, and grabbing different objects. And the older he becomes, the more activity he shows.

At some point in his growing up, the child begins to turn over independently, crawl, sit, stand on his feet, walk, and run. Parents should not accelerate these processes and create unnatural conditions to force the child to do something earlier and more than is laid down by nature.

Parents need to know that babies do not yet have solid bones and strong muscles, and any unnatural poses of their body or physical loads can cause irreparable harm during the formation of their body.

It always makes me sad to watch when parents, for convenience, seat a nursing baby on their arms and walk with them like that, or tie them to their belly in a sitting vertical

position to make it more convenient to move with him. Such treatment spoils posture and spine development, which will affect the child's development in subsequent years.

The baby should not be in such poses until his back strengthens and he begins to sit independently for long periods. Neither should convenient chairs for sitting be created for him, surrounded by pillows, if he cannot yet assume this position himself.

And so the child walked on his own feet. Although this looks clumsy and funny, new muscle groups come into action and begin to gain their elasticity and strength in natural loads. And it's amazing how quickly the baby masters the science of walking and running, and soon you understand that he has very little space in a closed room, and open space is the best place for splashing out accumulated energy and strength. And when these forces are exhausted, the baby is naturally drawn to sleep, after which he continues his restless games with new strength.

Blessed are those parents who live in such conditions where their children can freely develop and frolic in nature and in fresh air.

But many parents are very quickly tired by children's activity, especially if they also find themselves involved in these games. In such cases, it is necessary to be able to wisely exit the game and direct children's energy into a useful channel.

The law of children's body development teaches that the child should be mobile and have the opportunity to splash out his energy in natural conditions without harm to his health and without spoiling surrounding objects and property.

Clothing should correspond to games and not be too tight or constraining movement, but at the same time not too warm, so as not to cause excessive sweating of the body during active games.

As a rule, children very quickly show their inclinations and features in free time spending. An observant mother will easily

identify what the child likes most and what he plays more willingly.

Physical education and sports for children are subjects that must be approached wisely and principally. It should be taken into account that, in addition to physical load, some types of sports carry dangerous philosophy, and this can harm the child's soul and distract him from God. Children's muscles are not designed for excessive loads that are customary to give in sports exercises and special training. And there are some types of sports in which one part of muscles is trained while others remain without attention, which leads to imbalances in physique.

We are born to be beautiful, slender, and aesthetically composed both in body and face, as well as in spirit and soul. With proper upbringing and physical activity, all spiritual values and physical features will be brightly expressed in appearance.

Unfortunately, sometimes the lifestyle or manner of parents' upbringing makes invalids or sickly beings out of healthy children who are afraid of everything that brings benefit because they were taught so.

Girls, like boys, should not be limited in physical activity because they are girls. If there is opportunity, then they should equally participate in all games, climb trees, ride bicycles, and move as is accepted among boys. In adolescence comes rethinking and division by gender features, but while your children are still children, let them actively develop and rejoice in life.

God Himself arranged and laid energy into childhood so that there would be very much of it. And parents' wisdom consists in observing children's games and controlling their behavior, directing their energy so that they get used to actively doing something for the good of the family or for the benefit of other people. Housework should also be included in the routine of children's activity, but not through orders, but in the form of entertaining games and special joy. Children, as a rule, like to

help father and mother and show their creative abilities, especially when they are praised for this and inspired toward inventiveness and creative approach.

If there is no opportunity for children to be active outside the home, then equip a place for their active games in your dwelling.

If there is opportunity, then children need to be taught the art of swimming and the ability to independently stay afloat without auxiliary means. You don't know what situation your child might find himself in while traveling with his peers, and this knowledge can save his life. And once having learned to swim, he will not be afraid of water and will never forget this science. Moreover, contact with clean water from natural sources will always be beneficial and romantic if it doesn't lead the body to hypothermia.

Artificial pools are not the best place for constant use, since in order for water not to spoil and not bloom, and so that harmful bacteria don't multiply in it, much chemistry and poisonous substances are added to it, which ruins children's, and not only children's, organisms, though invisibly, but slowly and surely.

Believing parents, letting their children out on the street, should know where their children are, what they are doing, and with whom they are communicating. It's important that for the sake of physical activity, they don't fall under the bad influence of worldly people.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Eccl. 11:10; Prov. 22:6; 29:17; Ps. 31:8; 118:9; 126:3; 138:14; Matt. 18:10; Isa. 40:30-31; Gal. 6:7, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your memory?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What relationship exists between a child's health and mobility?
5. Why shouldn't parents accelerate the natural processes of a child's development?
6. What should parents do when children's activity tires them?

7. What requirements should children's clothing meet for active games?
8. What types of sports can be dangerous for children's souls and health?
9. What is the difference between natural children's activity, physical education, and sports training?
10. What role does proper posture play in a child's health?
11. Why shouldn't girls' physical activity be limited?
12. How should housework be included in children's activity?
13. What to do if there's no opportunity for active games outside the home?
14. Why is it important to direct children's energy into useful channels?

## Dedication and Purpose

When creating our world, calling thousands of living beings to life from nothing, the Lord had some special plan for all of this. He has nothing superfluous, and every living soul has its own purpose and mission on our earth. Sin introduced some corrections to our world, but all of God's creation remains the Lord's and belongs by right only to Him.

Man is the crown of creation and a masterpiece of God's creative design. Our world was created at a time when there was war in Heaven, which had already produced a division between the holy and the fallen. In creating the first people, the Lord was not creating sinners, but giving life to unique holy beings who had reason, consciousness, and freedom of choice. What did the Ruler of the worlds want to show the entire Universe through this creation? What purpose did man have, and what could he teach the unfallen worlds?

It was announced to all that man was created in the image and likeness of God, male and female, who could and would produce people like themselves. This was something new and mysterious, and all intelligent beings began to observe and study God's image, embodied in a visual aid.

Our God is an amazing God. He can reveal to us the depth and beauty of His character for an infinitely long time, so that then at the greatest depth He can reveal to us something very unique that we do not know, and invite us to enter into further revelations that will show us new deposits of God's depth. And in them we will see yet another facet of the beauty of God's character.

Although people fell under the temptation of sin, God turned this fall into a textbook for the entire Universe. And in it all intelligent beings can read how destructive sin is and what it leads the sinner to, as well as how great God's mercy and justice are toward all living and intelligent creation. The world was opened to the science of salvation, of God's love and of God's long-suffering.

At a certain time in the Plan of salvation, the Creator Himself was born into our world—a mystery that is difficult to believe, but which can be revealed and studied. The purpose of this birth was to reveal the image of God to man and restore the image of God in man. Jesus accomplished this task. His birth and death were predicted long before the incarnation of this plan, and all animal sacrifices pointed to the fact that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Christ's death opened a new depth of God's love, in which every sinner can find salvation, hope, and find something new and better for themselves. Each of us has a special purpose in God's Plan of salvation and a special mission that only he can fulfill. And man does not even suspect this mission.

Children of believing parents should at some conscious moment in their lives hear about their purpose and understand that they are special in God's eyes, that God has a unique plan for them, and that God needs them no less than they need Him.

We do not know what happens in a child's mind and heart when we dedicate him to God, when we tell him about Christ and teach obedience to God's law. But we can be confident that God accepts this dedication and begins to guide the life of the one we have dedicated and entrusted to Him. Parents are also endowed with special wisdom from above to better understand how to raise their offspring for a worthy life both in this world and in the future.

When our daughter was very small and could not yet walk, my wife and I decided to dedicate her to God. We believed that there was something in this ceremony that would help us raise our child in the right spirit and with God's help.

We were told what time this event would take place, and we brought our child before God's face. The minister laid hands on our daughter's head and said a solemn prayer, in which he asked the Lord for special influence, protection, upbringing, and blessing on this child. The Lord heard His servant's prayer and answered.

God likes to care for and specially protect those who are dedicated to Him. He receives the right to guide the lives of these little people and bless them in all their everyday matters. Parents also receive wisdom from above to instill the right principles of life in young consciousness.

Dedicating a child to God is not infant baptism. This is only a request that the Lord participate and provide support to parents in their spiritual upbringing of their children. If all spirituality ended at this event, there would be little benefit from any dedication.

This is like paying for a train ticket but not getting on it to arrive at the right place.

Dedication is an important step, but after this follows upbringing in the right spirit, with the right foundation and with the right purpose.

Children are interested in hearing stories about themselves. And when a child hears about his purpose, about how God loves him, how precious he is in God's eyes, when the child understands what and whom he lives for, and what he should strive for, then he has a life guide that will help in any situation to choose the right direction and make the right choice.

By dedicating children to God, telling them about their purpose, pointing out the true goal, raising them in the fear of God, we do not deprive them of freedom of choice and do not program them for absolute holiness. By this we help them determine themselves and, as much as it is in our power, protect them from evil and prepare them for the moment when they themselves must decide whom and how they will serve and worship.

It will be useful for the child to learn that, in addition to earthly parents, he also has a Heavenly Father who loves His children much more and stronger than we do. That he is a son or daughter of the Heavenly King, which should always be remembered and this dignity preserved. That the Lord wants to use him in His work and in the service that the young person will choose for himself. That Jesus won in this spiritual war and

will soon come for His friends who have dedicated their lives to Him and live for Him.

Yes, and the parents themselves would do well to understand their own purpose and re-dedicate themselves to God, so that He would be their Leader, Teacher, and Mentor in all life matters. Then there will be something to teach the children.

God has no such children for whom He could not find occupation and entrust service suitable for them. For everyone willing to work, He will find plenty of work and activities in God's vineyard. And it doesn't matter how much or how little will be done, but what matters is the spirit with which a person approaches his work.

The most important purpose, the fulfillment of which God desires to have and see in His children, is their love for one another. It is so important that the Lord declared this a commandment that everyone should not only know but also observe. And your children should understand this and have it among themselves, and it would be good for parents to follow this purpose in their environment.

Love and friendship bring happiness and blessing into life, fill it with true meaning and make it beautiful and wonderful for every child and adult, revealing the true beauty of God's character both to themselves and to the whole world. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Eph. 2:10; Jer. 1:5; 29:11; 1 Sam. 1:26-28; Luke 2:22-24; Mark 10:13-16; Ps. 138:16; Col. 1:16; Isa. 53:6; Gen. 1:27; John 3:17; 13:34-35; Heb. 9:22; Matt. 5:16, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What is purpose? How do you understand it?
5. What is dedication? How does it happen?
6. How often should someone dedicate someone and themselves to God?

7. Do you think if someone dedicates something to you, will it belong to you?
8. Every thing has its own purpose for which it is used. And what is the purpose of man, of male and female?
9. When can you start telling a child about his purpose in God's plan?
10. What signs indicate that a child is beginning to understand his purpose in God?
11. What should parents do after they have dedicated their children to God?
12. Is it important in dedicating children to God that their parents are also dedicated and understand their purpose?
13. Why is love for one another the main factor of dedication and purpose?
14. Why did God create man in His image and likeness? Should man correspond to this purpose?

## The Hyper-Responsible Mother

Family and children are a special blessing for any woman. Every girl from childhood plays games with dolls, imitating her care for future offspring.

When a woman finds a guy after her heart, then all her thoughts switch to him, and when getting married, she cannot imagine that if they have children, this could become the reason for their divorce. But unfortunately, this happens. And the problem is not in the child, but in the fact that some mothers bring themselves to such extremes in their motherhood that everything that can be destroyed is destroyed.

Maternal hyper-responsibility is when a mother forgets about everything in the world and takes upon herself excessive care for her child, for his health, for his upbringing and future success. This can be expressed both in complete dedication of all her time to her child, and in strong emotional attachment, where the mother stops noticing her needs and forgets about her personal life, and lives the child's life, believing that this is her duty before God and society, and that if she is distracted from this mission, the child's life will be destroyed, and troubles cannot be avoided. And if you add to this the imaginary anger of an offended God, then such mothers become very pitiful.

Not to paint too dark a picture, I will say that such an attitude toward children is not so common and may be at different stages of development. Such hyper-responsibility is not born suddenly from nothing, suddenly depriving a sensible person of reason. But this or that information from friends, acquaintances, or "unfortunate specialists" in this area can sow a bad seed and inspire an inexperienced girl with something that would never have occurred to her herself.

Jesus once expressed His indignation at such "counselors." We read in Luke 11:46: "And woe to you lawyers also! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers."

Someone can prove to an inexperienced woman that motherhood is absolute sacrifice. But it also happens that a young mother suddenly decides for herself that the child is the meaning of her life, and begins to live only for him, building her relationships so that the child cannot do anything without the mother's knowledge or consent.

How can hyper-responsibility be identified: — Guilt for any childhood problems and for not devoting enough time to upbringing; — Anxiety about the child's future, that he will be ill-mannered or deprived; — Distrust in caring for or raising the child in relation to any close relatives or even the husband; — Disagreement with anyone's opinion except one's own correct one; — Ignoring one's personal needs and interests in favor of the child; — Absence of personal life and interests, apart from caring for children; — Excessive control over any daily activities of the child.

Such an attitude toward children may not begin with all signs at once, but one extreme smoothly creates a transition to another.

It is possible that somewhere in consciousness such a mother anticipates future gratitude from her child for the fact that she devoted all of herself to raising a worthy member of society. But children by their nature are the most ungrateful people toward their parents, not understanding why they need to thank parents for what they were not asked to do or what they did out of love for children.

The father as head of the family also wants to participate in raising the child, but he is simply not allowed to do so, and any attempt to offer his model of behavior is nipped in the bud. The same attitude can extend to grandmothers and grandfathers. As a result, marital relations are destroyed or become dry and strained, and the mother becomes like a tigress protecting her offspring from surrounding people. Her quality of life decreases, and there is less and less joy.

Emotional burnout of the mother becomes an inevitable factor of excessive responsibility.

God places responsibility on parents for raising children and will ask where are those children who were entrusted to father and mother, but He does not place hyper-responsibility on the mother and does not call her to make an idol out of the child and serve him from morning to evening. In giving us children, the Lord wants to give us wisdom in their upbringing, and if someone decides to have his own opinion on how to raise children, it is difficult to give such a person something useful.

As a result of excessive maternal care, the child grows up with direct dependence on the mother's opinion and is unable to make independent decisions and take responsibility for his behavior. And having reached adult life, he involuntarily takes his mother's model of relationship into his family, manifesting the same spirit toward his future offspring. It will also be difficult for him to build relationships with other people. He will not have confidence in his abilities. He will lack motivation and leadership abilities. It will be difficult for him to achieve something in life.

What can emotional burnout in her family lead a woman to? To the fact that her "love" for the child will be replaced by rejection. Her self-esteem will be at the lowest level. There is no talk of personal life. Everything in life will become dark and gray, and everyone bad and unbearable.

Is there an alternative to excessive responsibility?

The mother's task is to teach the child good and proper manners, directing his gaze to God. The world of living beings is built so that the older care for the younger until the latter become independent and can take care of themselves, so that then they can take care of others. A wise mother teaches the child to be independent, not dependent on her.

Raising children should not cause anxiety and worry about the future. That child whom you are called to love will not tire or annoy you. The best approach in raising children is love for them and joy in them. A person will never get tired of someone he loves. Love places responsibility on us, but does not bring it to extremes.

I enjoy doing what I like. Raising children is very interesting, fun, and not difficult when you love them with all your soul and understand that they can respond to you in the same way.

There is no fear in love. It respects the freedom of little people but knows how to set the right life direction for them.

Even if the mother has physical or emotional fatigue in caring for children, her love for them and prayer to God replenish strength and give joy for each day.

The ability to cast all cares upon Jesus removes from the mother's shoulders the unbearable burden of many fears and troubles. The Savior gladly takes upon Himself many tasks of upbringing and gladly participates in the process of forming the child's character, giving his parents new revelations and blessing maternal labor.

Mistakes in raising children cannot be avoided, but love covers all and endures all. And sometimes it is worth letting the child make mistakes himself and independently seek solutions to problems.

God gives us children to raise, but by this He does not chain us in shackles, but teaches us to rejoice and keeps in our memory many wonderful memories from the life of a growing little person.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 1 Pet. 5:7; Prov. 14:1; Phil. 4:6-8; Matt. 6:31-34; 11:28-30; 2 Cor. 3:17; 1 John 4:18; Eccl. 7:6; 11:4; 1 Cor. 6:12; Ps. 54:23, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What is hyper-responsibility of a mother?
5. Why do some women take excessive responsibility for their children?
6. How can a mother's hyper-responsibility affect marital relationships?
7. Why is it important to trust other family members in raising a child and entrust your children to their hands?

8. How are love and responsibility connected in raising children?
9. Why is it important to teach a child independence?
10. Why is it important to maintain personal life and personal interests when raising children?
11. Why should feelings of guilt or fear not accompany the process of upbringing?
12. How to find balance between responsibility and excessive care?
13. What signs indicate the beginning of emotional burnout in a mother?
14. What other extremes in raising children do you know?

## Choosing Further Education

An 18th-century philosopher named Jean-Jacques Rousseau proposed to the world in his works a theory that children should have "free upbringing and education," in which they could choose their own path of creative development and naturally develop the natural potential for knowledge embedded in them. In the 20th century, experiments were conducted in the USA and England based on this philosopher's works, which caused a very great resonance in public and educational circles. As a result, the tragic consequences of such an approach to upbringing were revealed.

It was assumed that the instinct embedded in the child, if not interfered with, would itself suggest how and what to do, and the child would somehow miraculously develop his talents and surpass all his peers.

The success of such an educational model was only in cases when the child made it clear which subject he liked most, and then the educators gave him knowledge in this area. But without a basic foundation of learning, in isolation from adults, without the absence of emotional warmth from teachers, degradation occurred in the spiritual development and condition of the young generation. Most children had cognitive, emotional, and physical developmental delays. They became aggressive and mentally retarded in many everyday matters. Upon completion of such educational institutions, these graduates could not find worthy work for themselves and fully realize themselves in public life due to professional unsuitability, low level of responsibility, inability to adapt to highly organized living conditions. And the further life path led many of these young people to various kinds of sinful dependencies, to suicide, to a depraved or criminal lifestyle.

All such experiments led to the fact that in the absence of educational structure and the guiding role of adults, any natural or anarchic development destroys the child's psyche, slows down natural processes of personality formation, weakens analytical and mathematical skills, makes children

unable to socialize and adapt in society, reveals a complete absence of leadership qualities.

If, in contrast to "free education," we consider a model of strict academic discipline, high academic expectations, and obtaining deep knowledge and skills, then the result of such an educational system exceeds "free development" and has an advantage like day before night. But such a system of education has rigid requirements and a purposeful program not oriented to the peculiarities of mental development and perception of the child, and moreover, this education costs a lot of money, which many parents cannot afford.

As a rule, secular and state institutions do not have religious disciplines where children are instilled with skills of spiritual obedience and knowledge of God, which makes children unbelieving and hoping only in themselves, in their own strength and talents.

Also, some children are prone to emotional burnout when the requirements of the school program exceed the children's degree of perception and assimilation, and the certification system sometimes depends on the mood or prejudice of teachers, causing fear in children of receiving low grades. Also, concentration on individual subjects can lead to damage in general knowledge and to the absence of development of social skills, such as ease in communication and building relationships.

If parents have decided to engage in home education of their child, then they should consider the above examples and not be afraid to load the young student with a variety of subjects, ensuring that the spiritual side in knowing God develops harmoniously with the study of other disciplines.

Children should understand that God is the Primary Source of all knowledge and gives wisdom in all subjects.

It will also be correct to determine the natural abilities and interests of the child and teach him what he more willingly learns and does.

Learning to play some musical instrument should also be included in the school program, as this forms hearing and spiritual perception.

At what age should children's education begin, and when should they be given more load in the area of acquiring knowledge? A child's education should begin from the moment of birth. Communication with the baby, explaining to him your actions and the meaning of surrounding objects forms erudition and a desire for greater knowledge in the child's consciousness. Educational children's games are useful at any age and prepare the child for perception and analysis of more complex things, objects, and games.

If nothing is taught to the child, and then a stream of academic subjects is unleashed on him, it will be difficult for him to master the waterfall of new knowledge. But mind and body that are accustomed to receiving all kinds of tasks and loads will easily cope with more complex tasks and will successfully develop in mastering other sciences.

Children, unlike adults, get tired less, and sometimes their inexhaustible energy is surprising. But children also need emotional rest, which can be a change in their type of activity.

Spiritual upbringing invites the Creator Himself and the Heavenly Teacher into the life of the young generation, who gives the child wisdom in all other life spheres of education. God understands any subject taught in school programs better than anyone and can give the child special wisdom and memory in assimilating the material covered. Plus, spiritual upbringing makes children's character suitable for Eternity, and it will not be difficult for them to decide to enter into closer communication with Christ and build Eternal relationships with Him.

Parents should also bring into the practice of children's education lessons of love, happiness, and friendship. These subjects are not in any school program, but they are in the Bible, and it is necessary to teach children this. Such lessons

will form in them the ability to influence others and be spiritual leaders in any society.

Parents primarily need to become wise teachers and mentors themselves, choosing safe methods of necessary education, not relying on other people, the state, or the church to raise and educate their children.

Even if the laws of the country do not allow children to be educated at home, parents should not let their children's education take its course, but keep under control everything their children learn, and give wise explanations to all inconsistencies with God's requirements that their children will encounter.

Also included in the program of successful education is secret parental prayer, where father and mother daily ask for their offspring special God's blessings, special protection and guidance from above. God always answers sincere prayers of parents and adds to the life and development of children much that they would not receive without prayer.

And a friendly family atmosphere, mutual love and respect give the child a solid emotional foundation and protection in any trials and in any learning. Children who know they are loved are more successful students and become more creative personalities capable of solving many complex tasks and questions.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Ex. 31:1-6; 36:1; Prov. 2:4; 12:1; 18:15; 22:6; Ps. 31:8; 2 Tim. 3:16; Eccl. 10:15; 12:1; James 1:5, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. When do parents need to think about their child's education?
5. When can you start teaching children different life issues and values?
6. What is the most optimal age for a child to go to school?

7. Why is it important to combine spiritual development with academic education?
8. How does family atmosphere affect a child's ability to learn?
9. What role does spiritual upbringing play in children's education?
10. Why is it important to include lessons of love, happiness, and friendship in education?
11. Why is it important to gradually increase the academic load?
12. What qualities develop in children who know they are loved?  
And how does this help them in their studies?
13. How to properly organize rest for children in the learning process?
14. What responsibility lies on parents in their children's education?

## Computer Games

In early age, a child experiences the most intensive development of the organism, mind, and psyche. This is like building a ship at a shipyard, where first the main hull is erected, and then in strict sequence it is filled with all the necessary equipment, communications, inventory, internal paneling, and furniture.

The child's organism operates according to God's laws embedded in it, which activate the necessary functions at a certain age. And these must be known in order to be ready to sow and invest corresponding knowledge in the child's heart and instill important skills in the child.

There are things that develop a child, there are those that slow down his development, and there are those that destroy thinking, psyche, and health.

I think no sensible person would think of offering small children alcohol, cigarettes, or narcotic drugs. The laws of all countries protect the young generation from such things and criminally prosecute any violators. But when talk turns to computer games, phones, or gadgets that are produced specifically for children, then for some reason many parents' minds turn off, and they see a unique opportunity to occupy the child's consciousness with electronic games so that father or mother can rest and calmly attend to their affairs. And no one will pursue and punish them for this. And the child is always in sight, and there's no need to worry "where he is and what's happening with him."

But here it is necessary to sound the alarm! After all, the principle of influence of these games on the child's organism is exactly the same as that of narcotic drugs! Computer games cause the same neurochemical dependence in players as known drugs.

The human mind has a pleasure center and is arranged so that when a child performs certain work or solves problems, in the process of achieving the goal the brain releases the hormone

dopamine, which causes feelings of joy and satisfaction. And achieving this result requires a certain amount of time, physical or mental effort, logical thinking, and willful decision-making.

Computer games are arranged so that through sound effects, bright colors, and quick victories, they constantly stimulate the reward system, causing short-term dopamine releases. And these short-term pleasures are replaced by a desire to obtain greater satisfaction. The same principle is involved in taking drugs.

Prolonged time spent by a child playing such games exhausts the reward system, and short-term victories no longer bring the pleasure that was there initially. But the carnal mind has determined an easy path to obtaining reward and no longer wants to concentrate on ordinary life joys: walks in nature, reading books, doing homework, communication. All of this in the light of colorful games seems boring and uninteresting. And when consciously choosing another game, the child will prefer the computer.

Dopamine encourages actions that are important for survival and bring joy. This is eating, learning, communication, useful work. The release of this hormone brings pleasure into life. Computer games intercept this process and turn it into an instrument of dependence.

Under normal conditions, dopamine helps a person repeat useful actions, get pleasure from communication, from new knowledge, from God's revelations. Games create an illusion of success and victory, contributing to faster release of this hormone without requiring prolonged effort. This causes feelings of joy and desire to continue the game. The principle of "here and now" offers consciousness an easy path to quickly obtaining pleasure.

What happens in the mind? Addiction, boredom from everything not connected with games, loss of control. The player suffers not only in mind, but also in psyche and body.

Computer games are the fastest and surest way to kill time, spend it on emptiness and receive nothing good in return,

except virtual points and bonuses that these games offer winners.

All computer game enthusiasts display common symptoms:

- irritation when trying to tear away from the screen;
- decreased self-control and critical thinking;
- loss of interest in other activities;
- absence of time control;
- impaired imagination;
- decreased memory;
- quick fatigue during ordinary study and work;
- dependence on the game as the main source of joy.

Sadly, you often meet even in church children who during worship or breaks sit in their smartphones and are completely uninterested in what's happening around them. And after time passes, they disappear from view forever, and parents explain this by saying it was the child's choice, who chose the world, and they respect this choice.

It's also not surprising that gamer children are more prone to depression, suicide, irritation, inadequate reaction to life's ordinary difficulties. Their attention is scattered, and logical thinking leaves much to be desired. Time given by God for forming useful habits and skills is brought to the altar of this world, and the child receives emptiness, which, strangely enough, he values above all other earthly goods.

It's also worth considering that computer games are divided into worldly and demonic, entertaining and cruel. Sometimes even by the picture on the packaging or game advertisement, you can quickly determine the occult or demonic nature of the content. And here not only the child's mind comes under attack, but also his soul. There are even some games where, to move to a higher level of the game, you need to sell your soul to the devil, just by putting a checkmark of agreement. It's not worth being surprised by what happens afterward with the psyche of such "winners."

What does a warrior experience who takes another person's life? Initially it's fear, horror for what was done, pangs of

conscience, and then a habit develops to repeat this action. A child experiences the same feelings playing "shooters" and taking the lives of virtual enemies. A killer's consciousness is formed, and this mind stops valuing human life as a priceless God's gift and won't see much difference between the virtual world and the visual one.

Parents should understand that by offering children such games, they will later pay with years of worry for hours of peace.

Studying the Bible and comprehending the science of Salvation requires special concentration of spiritual and physical forces, special time and living interest from the student. Love of games kills these useful inclinations toward spiritual advantages.

The best thing God-fearing parents can do for their children in this matter is not to give their children any gadgets and not let them go to houses where it's customary to play computer games. And when school programs require computer work, monitor what their children are doing.

If you explain the harm of such games to a child before he takes them into his own hands from someone, then there will be hope that these games will not attract him when he grows up.

The minds of our children are a special target of Satan, and it's worth making considerable effort to comprehensively protect these little people from the temptations of our world.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Ps. 100:2-4; 118:9; 1 Sam. 2:17; Ezek. 8:12-13; Prov. 4:23; 13:20; 1 John 2:15-17; Matt. 5:29; 18:6; Eph. 5:15-16; 6:4; Eccl. 1:2; Col. 3:2; 1 Cor. 15:33; Rom. 12:2, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What are computer games for?
5. Is it worth comparing computer games with narcotic substances?

6. Is it worth understanding what biochemical processes occur in a child's body before offering him computer games?
7. What symptoms of computer game dependence do you know and can describe?
8. Why is it important to explain the harm of computer games before the first experience of using them?
9. Will children be limited in development if they are not allowed to play on a computer or smartphone?
10. Do computer games bring any benefit in nurturing spirituality?
11. How to protect children from the harmful influence of such games?
12. What to do if my children are already dependent on computer games and cannot imagine life without them?
13. What to do when you meet other people's children at worship who are playing computer games on their smartphones?
14. Do parents bear responsibility before God for what they offer to their own or other people's children?
15. What to do if your child was given a computer game as a gift, but you are against such a gift?

## **The Influence of Gadgets on Children's Minds**

A gadget is an electronic device that contains software for performing necessary functions and should be mobile and compact for transportation. Gadgets include mobile phones, smartphones, tablets, smart watches, pagers, and electronic books. All of this entered our lives not so long ago and became part of our everyday life. This should not be feared, but wisdom is needed to use this correctly, and somewhere to set boundaries that cannot be violated. A gadget in itself is not evil, as it is an ordinary information carrier, but the source of information itself can be evil or good.

A child was created to grow and develop in a society of similar people, to learn communication and receive wise instruction from adults, to receive from them those cultural and family characteristics that are characteristic of the environment in which he grows up. Parents are given wisdom from above so that they monitor the child's development and timely give him necessary instruction, teach him new sciences, help him develop comprehensively. All of this is within parents' power, and they should use this so that their child develops harmoniously and correctly.

Any source of information that gets into the hands of small children must necessarily be checked by parents. A child does not have sufficient means to independently go and choose a smartphone for himself and then use it as a toy. Any gadget that gets into children's hands begins its journey into children's lives, not bypassing parents. Only adults decide whether their children can use gadgets or not.

Modern electronic devices are designed so that, in addition to educational and useful programs, there are also entertainment functions, as well as internet access. And frequent use of such devices leads the child to neural dependence on the information received. Like computer games, the information flow can capture a child's mind, and indeed any adult person, affecting consciousness and binding to itself with strong neural bonds. Receiving another portion of interesting information, our brain

releases the hormone dopamine into the blood, which brings short-term satisfaction and joy. Over time, the hormonal system becomes exhausted, and the organism needs much more of this substance to get the expected satisfaction.

If computer electronic games carry more entertainment and emptiness, devaluing the child's tastes, then the internet carries quite a lot of analytical information and has a unique ability to influence and form worldview depending on what the end user listens to, reads, or watches. Ideology forms the child's consciousness, which then forms habits and becomes part of character.

What does the internet contain? This is a unique platform where a user can learn, be entertained, receive information, trade, communicate, correspond, play, watch and listen to anything, publish what he likes, engage in business, and do many useful and interesting things. Now choose from this list what your child would prefer if given freedom in this choice. If at first this might be a reasonable decision, soon this whole process will slide toward entertainment and games. Freedom of choice without wise guidance from adults will always lead a child to choose what is easier and what doesn't require work to get pleasure.

To get another portion of dopamine, a child doesn't need to make much effort using gadgets. Carnal nature will always choose an easier path to obtain greater pleasure. Uncontrolled stay on the internet and use of gadgets makes a child dependent, and he essentially becomes a spiritual drug addict, and the same processes occur in his organism as occur in chemical drug addicts.

It's important to note that internet culture has an ideology that doesn't just entertain, but also forms thinking in a certain direction. The enemy of the soul has taken care to stuff the worldwide web with all kinds of sources of destructive information that not even all adults can immediately distinguish. The enemy of the soul has learned to disguise his traps under Christian names and content.

A particular danger for both children and adults recently is represented by short videos that are posted by all kinds of users on different platforms to attract more subscribers to themselves. As a rule, these are interesting and amusing plots from other people's lives. They bring joy and quick pleasure, stimulating a person's hormonal system. The hormonal system comes into motion and satisfies the viewer with immediate releases of corresponding hormones into the blood. The mind, receiving short-term information, comes to no longer want to strain long-term to obtain reward. Superficial thinking is formed, and the person cannot concentrate on what requires prolonged attention and concentration of forces. Any prolonged activity begins to tire, becomes boring, and doesn't attract. The mind, accustomed to receiving quick satisfaction, doesn't want to strain because of more serious and long-term projects. A pattern of global stupefaction is formed. Although the person looks normal, this dependence on information flow will necessarily make itself known when in contact with others.

Not every adult can cope with such an attack by the enemy on the mind, let alone children who are not yet capable of analyzing and distinguishing good from evil. But the internet information flow is arranged so that it will necessarily attract your attention to these empty contents. Once falling into this information trap, a person won't have enough strength to break out of this network. Moreover, when a child watches what adults do, he learns, and a certain view of things is formed in him under the influence of the heroes of these videos. He hears what they say, how they react to various situations, how they respond having different problems, and he accordingly learns everything that the authors of publications offer.

But the biggest problem of all gadgets is that they don't carry love and cannot give a person what he can receive from his fellow man. Social relationships are destroyed, and the child plunges into a world of knowing good and evil, in which evil predominates. When buying a gadget for your child, think about whether it's worth giving his soul into the enemy's hands. Maybe it's better to allocate your precious time so that in cooperation with God and with parental wisdom you can invest

in the child's mind what will help him become a full-fledged person?

A child who has gotten used to receiving information from electronic sources will find it impossible to understand God's requirements and observe them. His mind is dead to spiritual truths. And parents, giving a gadget, have done everything possible to close the tender doors of children's consciousness to God's influence.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 3 John 1:4; Isa. 54:13; Prov. 4:1; 6:20-21; 22:15; Ps. 118:37; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 10:5; 1 Pet. 1:13; Mark 9:42; 1 Tim. 4:12, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Up to what age should gadgets not be given to children?
5. How to determine the boundary between useful and harmful use of gadgets for children?
6. Do parents bear responsibility for the child's information security?
7. What is the danger of free choice of content by children?
8. How does perception of reality change in children constantly using gadgets?
9. Why is it important to preserve live communication in the family?
10. How do short videos (shorts) affect a child's psyche and thinking?
11. What long-term consequences can unlimited use of gadgets have?
12. Why is it important to teach children to think critically?
13. Why can't gadgets give love and teach observance of God's commandments?
14. Are gadgets and computers evil?

## The Influence of Television

There was a time when there was no radio, no television, no internet, no electricity, and it's hard for us to imagine what people did in their free time from work. But they lived and lived well. And then came scientific and technological progress, and our world transformed into something new. All past fantastic stories became reality, and there's still so much interesting ahead.

Did man become happier in all of this? Did he become closer to God, from Whom he receives so many new ideas for amazing discoveries?

Our children, being born at this time, are not surprised by what we didn't have in our childhood. For them, all these unique things are part of their daily life, and they are very interested in trying and studying everything.

Television has firmly established itself in every home. And the TV has become an indispensable piece of furniture in every family. The most honorable place is allocated for it.

Comfortable furniture is arranged around it. The best time is devoted to it, and the lives of many people pass in the company of this companion, which has no mind, has no feelings, but is a soulless object through which all kinds of media can share whatever they want.

A television is not something that accidentally fell from somewhere into your home, and from which you now have nowhere to escape. I can say with confidence that this is the thing that a person chooses himself, buys himself, and himself allocates it that place in his dwelling where it will be located all the subsequent time.

The television itself poses no danger, except for the radiation that comes from the screen and has not yet been fully studied. But the programs it broadcasts to its viewers have a very strong influence on a person's mind and can form thought patterns, because they possess amazing convincing power. To prove

something as truth, it's sometimes enough to say that it was shown on television, and no one has doubts that this is true.

Much has already been said and written about the danger of television's influence, but since this question remains open even for God's people, it's worth considering it again, especially when there are small children who hear and see everything that comes from screens in their home. Although recently the internet has absorbed radio, television, cinematography, and computer innovations, television remains a classic source of propaganda, agitation, and information. It has a direct influence on viewers and forms in their consciousness what the producers of corresponding content desire.

Although television contains some channels devoted to the science of Salvation, for the most part all television content represents Babylon, which waters all nations with the furious wine of its fornication.

Jesus comes to those He loves, reproves and chastises, at the best time for communication and wants to spend it together with His disciples to teach them to use what they bought from Him, so that they could enrich others too. He stands at the door and knocks. But the noise of the turned-on television drowns out the knock at the door, and in the light of another series, Christ's voice is completely inaudible. And many don't want to tear themselves away from interesting world events so as not to miss something important.

It's difficult for God to compete with television. The Lord has an unshakable principle of respecting freedom of choice, and even offering the most vitally important things and wise advice, He does not violate human will, but patiently waits when His children take what is offered to them from pure sources.

The peculiarity of television is that the stream of broadcast information gets into the viewer's mind, bypassing barriers of critical perception, and forms a certain thought pattern in consciousness. The abundance of received information leads the mind to satiation, and to somehow protect itself, it turns on

a self-defense function and forms forgetfulness and indifference.

It's important to note that all visual information is deposited in the storage of our subconscious and is not forgotten by the enemy of the soul, who at a convenient moment reproduces in our memory what was placed there.

In essence, television becomes a direct competitor to God, occupying that place in human life which the Creator claims. Jesus promised us that the Holy Spirit would remind us of everything the Lord said. But if the shelves of our memory store informational junk of this world, whose supplies are constantly replenished, it will be difficult for a person to distinguish the clean from the unclean. And it's not entirely clear how the Holy Spirit will be able to use this spiritual Babylon for His plans.

Watching television takes away from a person the most important life resource—his time, which can be used to pay for heavenly goods. What can I appear before the Lord with if my resource is exhausted?

Information received from television programs is a convincing argument that forms the viewer's thinking. Whether I want it or not, in the end I will have to agree with the position that I constantly hear and see. And if we consider that we live in the last time, then now they broadcast a lot of news about all kinds of catastrophes, wars, bloodshed, natural disasters, and lawlessness, which overflow the mind and make me a passive viewer. And this viewer can only look and be transformed by the renewal of his mind, but does nothing to somehow ease human suffering and help others in their grief.

Children do not have the ability to distinguish good from evil and believe everything that is said to them from the television screen. About children's channels, it can be said that for the most part they corrupt and decompose the child's mind, making it incapable of perceiving serious truths of God's word. After television, the Bible looks rather boring. The mind of a child who has become accustomed to feeding from abundant sources of this world becomes incapable of accepting and digesting

vitality important truths of Divine science of salvation. And if you consider how much evil and violence a child sees every day, you can only be horrified by what forms his mind.

Man was not created for television or to spend hours at a flickering screen. What happens to those who sit for a long time on a comfortable sofa and continuously look in one direction? The body gets used to such pastime and adapts to such a lifestyle. The flesh likes this very much, and in such a state a person is open to thoughtless food intake. When the visual process occupies all attention, then the stomach doesn't receive proper signals from the brain and doesn't understand what gets into it and what to do with it.

Dopamine dependence in this case extends to television programs as well. But besides pleasure, television forms a certain view of many things that don't always correspond to Divine criteria. Television owners will find hundreds of justifications for this furniture to remain in their home. And the saddest thing is that we bring all this burden to the assembly of believing people and share with them what we ourselves are overflowing with. And what fruit will such assemblies bear for God?—You can easily imagine.

And coming for us, will the Lord find faith on earth?

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Isa. 33:14-17; Eph. 5:15-18; 1 Cor. 15:33; Rev. 3:20; 14:8; 18:1-4; Prov. 4:23; 1 John 4:1; Matt. 26:41; Ps. 100:3, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What is the difference between a television and television broadcasting? Is it worth understanding this? What represents danger: a knife in a person's hands or an evil spirit in the one who holds the knife?
5. Do you think modern television is Babylon, from which we are advised to come out? Rev. 18:4.
6. How can television drown out spiritual calls?

7. Why is information from the television screen perceived without critical thinking?
8. Why are children especially vulnerable to television content?
9. How does television form passivity and forgetfulness in the viewer?
10. What role does television play in forming public opinion and society's culture?
11. How can constant sitting in front of the television affect physical and mental health?
12. Why does the more time a person spends in front of the television, and the more information he draws from there, the less wise he becomes?
13. Why doesn't the Lord Himself turn off our television to communicate with us?
14. Do you think television will participate in imposing the mark and image of the beast?

## The Influence of Reading

Everything your child engages in is worth their time and your time, if you participate in their life. Children feel very well how quality the time is that you dedicate to them, and whether you are present in this time spent together. If you are near the children, but your thoughts or attention are somewhere else, then this is not what they expect from you. Little ones need not only your presence, but also your involvement in their activities.

One of the most beautiful ways to express your love through time is reading useful and interesting books together with your children. This is an activity that not only brings you closer to your children, but also broadens their horizons, enriches children's vocabulary, teaches them to construct their speech correctly and competently, forms their worldview, develops imagination and erudition, and teaches them something they never knew before. If you think you don't have the right voice, or you have poor diction, don't worry about it. Your children don't know about this, and to them you will be the best reader in the world.

Reading is not only spending time together, but also physical contact. You can seat a little one next to you or on your lap, hug them, stroke them, kiss their head when they look at the book. The child will let you know what physical contact suits them most, or will show that it's better not to touch them.

Depending on age, children should receive simpler and more colorful material for learning and gradually move to more complex material. But when there are older children, and the whole family gathers together, don't be afraid that the little ones don't understand anything. Be assured that their memory works better than you imagine. And although they don't understand the meaning of everything they hear, they are interested in what interests their older siblings.

Children's inheritance of home culture and family values works in an amazing way. It is passed from the older generation to the younger and forms a certain family identity.

Joint reading of spiritual books with subsequent discussion of the read topic forms a way of thinking in accordance with the parents' faith.

Although the Bible is a complex book that can be constantly read and new revelations found in it, it is also useful for small children. We don't know how the Holy Spirit works in children's consciousness, and how He presents heard truths to children's imagination, but the fact that children understand and remember more than we imagine should be remembered and taken into account.

Unlike computer games, television, and watching movies and cartoons, reading useful and spiritual books is a beneficial activity in which spiritual enrichment of the child's mind occurs, the ability to understand others and construct correct speech is developed, analytical thinking develops, reflection on plot and character behavior occurs, memory is trained on names, titles and events. During reading, children's consciousness itself draws in young imagination those images about which it hears.

With calm reading there is no imposition of artificial pictures and plots that don't exist in life. And the Holy Spirit, through the prayers of parents and children themselves, can reveal imagined images to young listeners in the right light.

Spiritual books were written to form certain values in the reader, to give examples of virtue, humility, patience and love. They teach good and call sin evil. Through them God's law and the importance of its fulfillment are revealed to the child, examples of obedience and punishment of the guilty are given, motivation for imitation is instilled.

A child knows how to enter into the plot and begins to empathize with the heroes of stories, to live through their feelings and emotions, which helps them better understand their own feelings too.

Contact of the child's mind with God's Word makes the child's mind more developed and erudite.

Spiritual books are usually written to reveal important topics more deeply and consistently. And this gives more complete information about what is being read than can be seen in television programs. When parents ask questions about what was heard during reading and listen to answers, then such practice teaches the child to analyze what was read and draw conclusions.

Reading forms intuition, perseverance, patience, attentiveness, prudence and the ability to concentrate on one thing. And children's questions about what was read speak of their interest and desire for deeper assimilation of the material covered. Children learn to think and reason.

Reading spiritual literature does not cause aggression, does not lead to stress or mental disorders, but rather calms and gives confidence and peace in God.

Jesus taught that in the days of His Second Coming people would not think about the main things.

Parents should also understand that the purpose of reading is not only to gain useful knowledge and skills, but also to know the One True God and Jesus Christ whom He sent, which will allow them to learn to love one another.

The time comes when a child learns to read themselves and can already independently choose books and study them. Here it's important for parents to establish control over what children choose for reading.

Fairy tales, detective stories, fantasy and adventures carry a completely different ideology and nullify the understanding of good and evil. They teach that luck and success come not from obedience to truth, but by chance or luck, or through cunning and deception. Violence, murders and other types of evil are sometimes presented in such an enticing way that the reader perceives such behavior as something good and begins to imitate it.

Just as God forms the mind under the influence of what is read, so Satan has his arsenal of literature to destroy and corrupt,

and to form the mindset of a sinner. Any elements of evil can develop fear, anxiety and other mental disorders in children's psyche. And if children receive such material for reading from parents or with their consent, then spiritual things will soon be displaced from children's consciousness, or everything will be so mixed in the young mind that there will be no distinction between good and evil.

Imagination built on fictional stories will be unable to distinguish reality from fantasy.

As a rule, negative heroes have the same negative habits and behavioral patterns, which are absorbed by the young reader as an example to follow, and superficial plots lead to frivolity and make the mind incapable of perceiving spiritual values.

Recently, unfortunately, there are many books for children that teach magic and Satanism, debauchery and perversions, so parents' task includes keeping under control everything that is offered to their children, as well as children's visits to those places and societies where such things may be read.

Trusting relationships help quickly identify the evil with which your children have nevertheless come into contact, and explain to them how dangerous and harmful it is to listen to and read such things. The world is full of evil, but those who fear God have much that is good and useful for teaching and instruction in righteousness. And God keeps those who do everything to be at peace with God.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Proverbs 1:8-9; 4:1-2; 13:20; 22:6; Colossians 3:16; Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:4; Psalm 118:105; Isaiah 54:13; Joel 1:3; Matthew 24:39; Ecclesiastes 12:11-14, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. How can joint reading strengthen the emotional bond between parents and children?
5. Do you think physical contact is important for a child during reading?

6. How does reading develop a child's imagination differently from watching television or computer games?
7. How and through what does reading form moral values and understanding of good and evil?
8. Why is it important to discuss what was read with the child?
9. How to choose books that truly develop the child?
10. How to recognize negative influence of literature on a child?
11. How do reading spiritual books and proper nutrition affect a child's academic performance? Daniel 1:20
12. How can you motivate a child to read independently?
13. How, without prohibitions, can you teach a child to choose useful books?
14. How can reading be turned into an engaging family ritual?

## Father's Authority

It is written in Proverbs 14:1: "The wise woman builds her house..." The role of the mother in forming the worldview of her children is very great. She has the greatest influence on the consciousness of her little students and with her life gives them a clear example of how it's necessary to behave in difficult situations, how to relate to others, how to love and much more.

Father's authority is accepting him as he is with sincere respect, recognition by all family members of his headship, leadership, that he is God's representative and mentor. The foundation of this authority is the unconditional visible love of the father for the mother of his children and the same pure and constant love for all his sons and daughters. He is a spiritual leader and master of his word, fulfills all his promises, doesn't allow anger or irritation to destroy the heavenly atmosphere in the house, always actively participates in family life, affirms the influence of his words with his actions, adores his wife and is faithful to her under any circumstances.

But the role of the mother in forming her husband's authority is much greater and more important, and she can begin practicing it even before the birth of the first child. The woman's decision determines whether her man will be respected by her children, or whether she won't teach them this.

Forming authority for her husband in the eyes of his children is the most important science that any woman needs to understand, learn and make efforts to embody this knowledge into her life. Not all husbands behave as the Lord expects. Many of them by their behavior and attitude kill any initiative of their wives, but still one must fight for family happiness and create it where it seems impossible. A woman needs to overcome the innate selfishness of her carnal nature and establish the banner of Christ in her heart. The Lord will give His strength and wisdom to every woman who wants to make her home an impregnable bastion for the spirits of wickedness in heavenly places.

Any construction follows certain laws and requires much time. The beginning in building a husband's authority is laid in the head of his wife, when she begins to understand that this prerogative belongs to her and she can with her hands build something beautiful, or she can destroy not only the life of another person, but her own too.

A husband is arranged so that he needs respect, honor and admiration from his wife. He himself cannot reproduce this in her if she doesn't want to, and short-term or episodic manifestations of respect won't satisfy him overall. If he asks his wife to create authority for him in the eyes of her children, then she, not understanding what this is, may build something completely different from what he had in mind. A husband can and should win his wife's authority through his behavior, his care and unconditional love, but he won't be able to build this with her hands against her will.

The Heavenly Father desires to have authority for Himself and His Son in His church, and He has done everything that depends on Him. But not everywhere does the Lord have authority. Somewhere He is presented to the world as a "Life preserver," somewhere as a "Crutch" or "Emergency aid." But He is the Creator and Lord of the Universe, to Whom all His children consciously bow, with whom He is in absolute authority. But His beloved church doesn't always understand how she can create authority for her Head, and goes into the world to gain experience there and learn in another way to bring people into her ranks. What can we say about many families?

And so the wife decided to create authority for her husband. In prayer to God she declared her decision and asked Him for wisdom and strength from above, to do everything correctly. And the Lord began to reveal to her some laws of this construction, which she can very easily understand and apply even in the absence of her husband.

Children don't need to be proven that their father is the best dad in the world. It's enough to constantly tell them about this

and behave in his presence so that children see what a respected father they have.

It's not at all difficult for a loving wife to find good character traits in her spouse and voice them in front of the children, explaining to them that no one has such a wonderful father. The influence of the mother's words will be indisputably supported and accepted by the little ones, and constant reminding about this will only affirm them in this truth.

The mother knows how to correctly present any action or word of their dad to the children. Even if he accidentally made a mistake or showed foolishness in something, a wise wife will find many justifications and explanations for his miscalculations and with her calmness will make it clear that nothing terrible happened, daddy is just tired and needs peace and rest.

From the mother's words children learn that their father is the smartest, wisest and very beloved, and that there are no other such fathers, and therefore their daddy must be cherished, loved and always listened to.

Upon arriving home, the husband will always see in the joyful meeting with his children that influence of mommy's words that she instilled in the children in his absence.

Mom makes many different decisions during the day, but she consciously reduces everything to the fact that daddy's decisions are the most important, and they need to be strictly followed, and with her obedience gives an example of how this looks in practice. Even if she disagrees with some of her spouse's decisions, she won't argue about it in front of the children, and then will resolve these issues in the best way privately. The expression that mom and dad decided something together will create authority for the father equal to their mother's authority. And if children act willfully, then the mother will definitely hint to them that daddy will be unpleasant to learn about this, because his word is law for everyone.

A wise mother won't appropriate children only to herself and keep them at a distance from their father. On the contrary, she will do everything possible so that her husband is actively

involved in the children's lives and makes his irreplaceable contribution to their upbringing and formation.

Mom will admire daddy in front of the children and tell them about what a wonderful husband the Lord gave her. She will always have in reserve stories from their acquaintance and about how many blessings she now has in the company of this man. And then she will arrange a contest of who among the children can say more kind words and compliments to daddy, adding her own answers too.

Well, and if father does something special for his family, then mom immediately notices this and teaches the children to thank daddy for such wonderful deeds for the common good, thereby inspiring the head of the family to more significant actions.

Mom is always interested in organizing something for the family with her husband's participation, and she encourages children to be in daddy's company, praises them for supporting father in his projects, and herself participates with admiration in everything where her presence is necessary. And when children decide to spend time for personal communication alone with their father, then mom expresses genuine joy, because they will be able to spend their time in the company of such a wonderful person.

Since according to God's plan the father is the head of the family, the mother constantly reminds all children of this during daddy's absence and teaches them that God Himself established such family hierarchy.

She supports all her words with biblical texts and convinces her pupils that by obeying their father, they thereby honor God and receive special blessings from above. And then she reinforces her instructions with prayer for the head of the family and teaches children to pray for daddy at all times, and especially when there is an acute need for this. She practices the same thing in personal presence during the father's leadership in family worship.

Children accustomed from childhood to honoring their parents will know how to show this respect until old age and spread this influence to other people too.

The mother's gratitude to God for her dear husband will give children an example of how they should pray for their parents.

The father, in turn, teaches children that their mother is the queen of the family and that there is no one better than her in the whole wide world. And the greater authority the father has in children's eyes, the more convincing his compliments regarding his spouse will sound.

It's difficult to describe that children's happiness that the kids experience in the company of the best parents they have known since childhood and have been taught to love them for everything in the world and just because.

A wise mother will always present the father's words and expectations as something that must be obeyed out of a feeling of love, and with her personal example will support her husband with impeccable obedience in the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit. Having such an example to follow, it will be natural for children to show obedience to the will of the Heavenly Father, Whose words are constantly read during morning and evening home worship services.

If children suddenly decide to show disobedience, violating their father's will, then the mother immediately stands up to defend the authority of the head of the family and explains to the children that such an attitude is illegal and will be punishable. Her words contain firmness and respect for the choice of other family members. And if she sees that the father's decision was wrong, she won't discredit him in the presence of children, but will try to figure this out privately, presenting this situation as a strange misunderstanding that needs to be sorted out, but at the same time not resist the father's voiced will, but fulfill what he expects.

If her spouse understands his mistake and haste in making wrong decisions, then it won't be difficult for him to apologize

to everyone and thank them for the fact that they, despite everything, preserved the spirit of obedience.

Parents shouldn't be ashamed to show their pure love for each other in front of children. Let children be constant witnesses of how daddy hugs mommy, how he kisses and praises her for any reason, how he willingly helps her with household chores, spends time with her and gives her something pleasant. Even if it seems that children are busy with their games, it's worth remembering that they see, hear and remember everything that happens between parents. The atmosphere of love between spouses will have an amazing influence on children's hearts too. It will be very interesting for children to love the one their mom loves, and they won't be ashamed to express their love for their father, as their mother clearly teaches how to love and honor daddy, especially when he comes home from work.

The father, coming home after a hard working day, understands that it wasn't easier for his wife and, understanding her need for short-term rest, does everything possible to attract the company of his pets to himself and allow his spouse to attend to her plans and rest a little.

The wife always shows genuine attention to her husband's words, even if it relates to children. She gives an example, showing that daddy must be listened to attentively. She teaches children to show the same spirit toward everything they are told.

Children should understand that daddy is an imperfect person who can also make mistakes, and if they together with mommy noticed these mistakes, then the mother should point out to the children that right now their daddy needs their support and unconditional love.

It's also important for children to understand and hear that the final decision or word always lies in their father's power, and the mother teaches them to wait for what daddy will say in order to act based on his decisions. But the father should also show wisdom so that children don't manipulate this power. If the mother forbade them to do something, then they don't need

to ask daddy for permission to violate the maternal prohibition. If such manipulations occur, then the father needs to stand up for the mother's honor and take measures to eliminate such a cunning spirit.

If the wife sees in children the manifestation of positive qualities or skills inherent to her husband, then she should inform the children that they are very similar to daddy in this and thanks to his care and instructions they can now so gladden her heart.

It's not difficult for a mother to teach children that their daddy is a leader and head of the family. And the fact that she puts the father above herself doesn't at all diminish her role in raising children, but, on the contrary, teaches them that since God established it this way, then it's correct, and there is special blessing in this.

Your children will visit other families and see how parents relate to each other there, and involuntarily compare these relationships with relationships in their own home. Also, other children will come to your home and see what order in relationships is present in your family. That respect and love that all family members show to each other will have their good influence on all guests too, who will understand that you are Jesus's disciples and your home is that place where God's angels are pleased to be and where it's pleasant for them to carry Heavenly light to all who come to you.

The influence of a family in which its members mutually love each other and respect each other's rights will always clearly testify to the entire environment about the wisdom and glory of God, Who is their Teacher and the Head of the husband.

As a rule, fathers tend to be the main breadwinners and spend more time away from home, and a wise mother will teach children that in this absence their father shows special love and care for the family, trying to do everything so that they have means for food, all necessary things and a warm cozy dwelling.

Children tend to take the behavioral model from their parental home into their future families. And if this model corresponds

to God's plans, then it will spread to future offspring too, as God will remind and support those who want to be His witness in every place.

A wise mother will never humiliate the father's authority with mockery at his address, silly jokes and sarcasm. She won't support gossip or those conversations that will humiliate her husband or discredit him in the eyes of children. And if she learns that such information came from outside, she will definitely do everything possible to neutralize the harmful effect of such words and restore her husband's authority.

The wife's desire to build authority for her man will have God's blessing and approval, which will definitely be reflected in the children. Children accept from their mother everything she gives them and teaches them. And when the father has authority with his children, then it's very easy for him to convey to their minds those important truths that will help them be victors in any trial, for he who loves has fulfilled God's law.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 1:8; 14:1; 17:6; 19:14; 20:7; 31:10,26-31; Psalm 127:3; Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:1-4; 1 Peter 3:1-13; 4:8, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What is father's authority?
5. Should the father himself behave in such a way as to maintain his authority?
6. Why is the mother's role in forming her husband's authority considered more important?
7. When can a woman begin forming her husband's authority?
8. How should a woman act if her husband doesn't meet expectations?
9. Can a husband independently build his authority in children's eyes if his wife doesn't do this?
10. How should a mother speak about the father in the presence of children?
11. What practical steps can a wife take to create her husband's authority?

12. How does constant positive mention of the father affect children?
13. What consequences can the absence of father's authority in the family have?
14. Will a wife reap good treatment from children toward herself if she constantly builds authority for her husband?
15. Was this lesson useful to you?

## Building Father's Authority

Family happiness is what he and she build together, inviting Jesus into these relationships, Who is the solid Foundation of any building. If someone is removed from this union or their own rules are introduced that come from a selfish heart, then it's unlikely that anything good will come of it.

If I see that my wife is trying her best to create authority for me in the eyes of my children, but I myself by my behavior and attitude destroy everything she builds, then it's possible that my spouse will be happy in relationships with the Lord and in her principles, but not in my company. And the children will feel guilty for my selfishness. I will consider myself right.

But still the woman's role in building authority for her husband is quite large. In the Bible there is a story about Abigail, Nabal's wife, who with her love for her husband saved his life from inevitable death and at the same time evoked indisputable respect from those who planned this reprisal. We read 1 Samuel 25:2-42.

A wife who cooperates with God has amazing influence on her environment. Each of us knows such women who, having their "Nabals" in their families, do everything possible so that their family is preserved, and all household members have comfort and care. And only the Lord knows how many tears were shed by His daughters so that their selfish husbands would have a cozy home and sincere hospitality.

There is a narrow path of building family happiness that is approved by God, and walking on which, you won't get lost. This is a path where husband and wife love each other, show mutual respect and preserve a friendly spirit under any circumstances. What could be more beautiful than when you create authority for a person you sincerely love and receive the same attitude from him in return? Building authority with such an arrangement of things becomes a natural process in forming family happiness. The mother won't be able to hide her love for her husband, and children will see and feel this in every

conversation she has about daddy. The spirit of love is contagious, and children's hearts don't know anything else yet, and they will have to take this position, which is naturally demanded by their souls.

Many of you, reading these lessons, see a completely different picture in your families and think that this is impossible to fix. But we have a wonderful God Who can make something beautiful out of nothing, resurrect the dead and instill hope where there is none. We all once wandered like sheep without a flock, but the Lord gathered us and gave us salvation, and through us now saves others. For God there are no incurable diseases, but there are incurable people. So let's not lose hope and see such things that we ourselves will be amazed. Jeremiah 33:3.

Spouses who love each other are very good material for implementing any of God's plans. But for these plans to be realized, both sides need to know them and make a joint decision to go this way and build in this direction. If a husband, in his own way loving his wife, thinks that authority is guaranteed to him, and the wife doesn't even have a concept of what this is and why it's needed, then it's quite possible that instead of kind words, right actions and wise instructions, she will simply remain silent and inwardly love her chosen one, considering that she doesn't need to give him excessive advertising even to his children. And it turns out that a loving father is good only when he is personally present at home.

If I have close relationships with Jesus, believe in Him, wait for Him, but don't tell anyone about Him, don't create authority for Him, then who will know Christ in my behavior? Who will want to give Him their life in response to my silence? Who will be interested in building personal relationships with One Whom I don't advertise? Faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the word of God (Romans 10:17).

A loving wife should become a witness of her relationships with a loving father for her children, and then children's observations and mommy's instructions will build in the child's mind what will be firmly established in their hearts for life.

Building father's authority is a lifelong work and this is what unites all family members into one whole society, relationships in which will be strong until death and will spread to new families for a thousand generations.

The husband with his kind attitude, words and deeds lays a solid foundation for further building, and with his behavior affirms all the wife's efforts and helps her form the right image of father in children's consciousness. Children who have a clear example of father's love in their home will find it easy to imagine the unconditional love of the Heavenly Father. Their earthly daddy will always be a prototype of the Heavenly One.

Father's love for his household will be expressed not in earning means for living, on which many husbands place the main emphasis, but also in the personal example of his care for household members, in fulfilling promises, in fair treatment, in respecting others' choices, in direct participation in family life, in respectful and tender attitude toward the mother, in the ability to listen and delve into the essence of any problems, in easy and constant availability, in the role of spiritual leader and mentor, in manifestation of unconditional love and in everything else that love suggests to his heart.

How long do beautiful and cozy dwellings take to build? Very long, a whole lifetime. And it's very good for everyone to live in them. And how quickly can a cozy home be destroyed? Very quickly, especially if there's a war. Any anger, unfaithfulness, evil spirit, failure to fulfill promises, indifference to family needs, deception is destructive, and destructive not only to father's authority, but also to the souls of all household members. But there is hope and good news that God can restore ruins and erect beautiful palaces from ruins, if spouses believe in this and agree among themselves (Amos 3:3).

We are not created for constant war with each other. Such relationships end in divorce or lead to mutual peace, where both understand that something needs to be changed and there's no point in fighting, because everything can be agreed upon. And spouses begin at the level of their thoughts to drive out the enemy of the soul and not give him place in their hearts.

Family happiness is worth going toward, worth fighting for, worth living cozily in. This is part of God's plan for our salvation, in which we will be protected from many temptations and endowed with special strength.

A wife who builds authority for her husband in children's eyes is the same kind of God's worker as a pastor who seeks lost sheep and brings them to God's flock. A wise mother, building authority for the father of her children, thereby fulfills God's will, worships God in spirit and truth and has abundant God's support and personal participation of the Holy Spirit in all her enterprises.

The path of selfishness leads the soul to a dead end of despair, fear and disappointments, and God's path of love, happiness and friendship opens endless perspectives for constant development, for overcoming difficulties, for spiritual growth and for eternal God's blessings, which only wait their turn to pour into the lives of thirsting, seeking and loving souls.

Building authority for her husband is the best thing a wife can think of for the good of her entire family, and she will never be alone in this building.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 1 Corinthians 3:8-17; Matthew 7:24-27; 1 Samuel 25:2-42; Colossians 3:14; Galatians 6:2; Joshua 24:15; Psalm 126:1; Proverbs 11:14; 14:1; Philippians 2:14-16, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Why is family happiness compared to building, and who is its foundation?
5. What does the biblical story of Abigail and Nabal teach us?
6. How does a wife's cooperation with God affect the atmosphere in the family?
7. Why is it important not only to love, but also to speak about your love?
8. Why is building father's authority a lifelong work?

9. What specific actions does a husband take to lay the foundation of his authority?
10. Why is it important that the earthly father be a prototype of the Heavenly Father for children?
11. Why is silent love of wife for husband and husband for wife not enough?
12. How are the father's spiritual leadership and his authority in the family connected?
13. Why is respectful treatment of the wife by the husband important before children?
14. Why is building family happiness part of God's Plan of salvation?

## Father

Our parents and children are those people we consider the closest and dearest to us. And if there is also spiritual unity between us, then this connection together with kinship ties makes our families so strong and close that you understand how wonderful God's plan is regarding such unions, and constantly thank God for it.

The role of the father's influence on his children is provided for and embedded by God in every union, regardless of place of residence and culture, but only when the behavior and spirit of the head of the family correspond to God's expectations do they have the proper influence on the mind and consciousness of children and form a complete personality in the growing generation.

Mother and father, being one whole and doing one common work in raising children and forming their characters, at the same time have different influence and different forms of service in their family. By his physiology, a father can never give children what their mother has, but at the same time no mother can replace a father for children or show them those masculine characteristics that she simply cannot have by God's design.

Unfortunately, there are many single-parent families and children born out of wedlock in the world, but we will consider the option where a man, even not being a blood father, decided to take responsibility for being a dad and give his children what they desperately need - his masculine participation in their lives.

The first thing every little one who comes into this world needs is to be needed and loved. These are the very first emotional needs of a child, which they feel and understand perfectly. A father, taking his little successor in his arms, fills their spiritual and emotional need and binds this little being to himself with very strong spiritual bonds that are difficult to describe in

simple words. The child feels protection and finds peace and tranquility in which they can freely grow and develop.

The father is a prototype of the Heavenly Father and is endowed with Heavenly authority to influence his children and form in them those spiritual values that will subsequently guide their actions and desires. According to God's design, the father is the head of the family and spiritual leader and is endowed with corresponding influence to give children that knowledge which will form their personal opinion in accordance with God's requirements.

Personal example from the father's life and behavior is the most powerful convincing means that teaches children how deeds should correspond to words and instructions.

The father's duties as spiritual leader include the task of directing children's minds to Heavenly truths and teaching the growing generation obedience based on God's commands and expectations. And then by personal example he must demonstrate this obedience in his life. A praying father shows children the importance of such connection with God and gives them a model of where to receive strength and inspiration. Reading the Bible to children and reflecting aloud on what was read, the father teaches that the truths of Scripture are important in daily life and are spiritual bread without which it's impossible to live fully.

Engaging in service to his family and other people, the head of the family shows children how to practically apply received knowledge and how deeds should correspond to God's principles.

With his love for good and abhorrence of evil, a wise father demonstrates the difference between good and evil and lays a solid foundation of such attitude in young consciousness. Children, observing daddy's principled stance, his honesty, his kindness and tenderness, adopt these soul qualities into their lives and behave exactly the same way. Observing the father's patience, seeing his industriousness, diligence, principled

stance, responsibility, it will be easy for young observers to practice similar things in their own lives.

The father's strictness together with his tenderness and mercy instills in children a sense of security and justice. They are not afraid to trust one who loves them, and are ready to confess all their sins and mistakes, understanding that it's difficult to hide anything from daddy, and there's no need to. And the sense of safety makes children fearless in exploring this world and in practicing various principles, which opens their new creative features.

Time spent in the company of their loving father, children consider the most valuable and significant pastime, in which they constantly learn something, are taught something and simply enjoy this society. What does a small, soft and warm child's hand, trustingly placed in the father's hand, give? This is inexplicable joy for a man when he feels this and understands that this child's life is entrusted to him, and that he is valued so much that they are not afraid to walk hand in hand with him. Although this is a short-term experience, it forms something very important in daddy's heart regarding the one who entrusts themselves to him.

The father with his strictness instills in children love for discipline and teaches them that any transgression should be justly punished, and every good deed should become the norm of behavior in their home. And love for discipline and order based on the Bible shows children the immutability of all God's requirements and those blessings that belong to obedient people.

By honoring his parents, the father teaches his children how to honor their parents.

Daddy's love for his wife lays the foundation in children's consciousness for their future family happiness. This teaches sons how to properly treat a woman, and shows girls an example of how a worthy man should behave toward them. The father's love for their mother and tender attitude toward the queen of the family clearly shows children what love is, how it

manifests itself, how beautiful it is and how much benefit it brings to everyone. A father loving his wife is an image of God loving His Church.

Agreement and mutual respect between parents and tender attitude toward the weaker teaches children life in society and the importance of being part of one team, where everyone has their duties and works for the common good. And in such a society it's easy to achieve set goals and solve difficult tasks.

The father lays in children not only principles of correct behavior for the present time, but also forms a beautiful future for his children who, being instructed in good things in childhood, will preserve these values until old age and will be guided by those principles they were taught in their father's house.

Examples from the life of Joseph in Egypt or Daniel and his friends in Babylon show the power of parental upbringing in action.

The father influences with his authority the choice of life path and spiritual values in his home. He establishes family traditions and sets family holidays. He shows how to properly exit conflicts and how not to allow them. The father protects his home from outside influence and fights against any other spirit that will try to destroy family happiness.

A wise father understands that his children are given to him for a short time, to teach them right things and then release them into the raging world, in which they must themselves choose the course for their ship and invite aboard those with whom they decide to make joint voyages.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Exodus 20:12; Psalm 77:5-7; 102:13; Hebrews 12:5-11; Proverbs 10:1; 14:26; 17:6; 20:7; 23:22; Acts 16:31; Ephesians 6:1-4, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Who is a father?

5. What is the difference between a father's influence on his children and a mother's influence?
6. Why is the father's personal example important for raising children?
7. Is it important for a father to know and understand his role and purpose in the family? What advantage do these knowledge give him?
8. How does the father's prayer help children understand the importance of connection with God?
9. Why is it important for a father to read the Bible to children and give them instructions based on what was read?
10. How does serving his family help a father teach children the principles of God's teachings?
11. How does a strict yet tender father influence children's sense of security?
12. Why should there be a combination of strictness and tenderness in a father?
13. How does love for discipline and order help children understand God's requirements?
14. Will a loving father correctly represent to his children the image of God?

## **The Father's Role in His Daughter's Life**

Between father and daughter there is a mutual invisible connection that is established from the moment this little girl comes into the world. God embedded in the female heart a natural emotional attraction to the opposite sex, and this property of the female soul never ceases to amaze and attract the male half of the world. Taking in his arms such a priceless gift from the Lord, every father experiences something special in his heart and begins to understand that this living being is entrusted to his power, from whom he must make a worthy person.

The very consciousness that another little woman has appeared in your life never ceases to gladden the heart. And this is your native little person forever, and you can't get away from her, and you don't need to.

A believing father accepts this priceless gift from the Lord with special gratitude, understanding that enormous responsibility for the life and upbringing of this soul is placed upon him. And from this time the Lord begins to endow His faithful servant with the wisdom of a father, so that through him He can reveal to this new young soul the beauty of God's character, manifested in the life and attitude of her daddy.

The father's role in his daughter's life is very great and influential. It's not difficult for a woman to understand a woman, but masculine logic and the masculine view of life of an adult person always attracts a girl's consciousness. In the example of a believing daddy she sees the image of the Heavenly Father, the image of a real man is formed in her, she realizes her security, recognition and support and receives the love her heart so desperately needs.

According to researchers' observations, it was revealed that daughters who receive more emotional support from their fathers have high self-confidence and positive self-esteem. Also, the father, with his love and care, lays in his daughter's consciousness the foundation for her future relationships with

the opposite sex and builds strong trusting relationships for a long time, filling the daughter's emotional needs for masculine love. Such influence of the father protects the young woman from many temptations and prevents her from building questionable relationships with men on the side.

A living example of the father's love for the mother lays the foundation in female worldview about what correct and healthy family relationships should be like, which protects the girl from superficial and toxic personalities seeking quick pleasures. The father's unconditional love satisfies the girl's need for masculine attention and she doesn't go looking for the lack of this love on the side, which protects her from many troubles.

Girls are very observant of how their father treats their mother, how he cares for her, how he serves her, how he communicates with her. All loving relationships between parents create in the young lady's consciousness a solid image of future family and form her life position regarding her future.

Having a loving father in her home, a girl has special strength in this to overcome many difficulties and complex trials. When she knows that she has a daddy who always loves her and who always needs her, then it will be easier for her to go through various life storms and she will always know that her father will support her, comfort her and give the right assessment to everything that happened.

A loving daddy doesn't hide his feelings from his daughter, but constantly convinces her of his love and affirms his friendliness with this. He doesn't hide that he takes strength to love from the one true Source of life and often demonstrates how these requests to God should sound. When a daughter hears her name in her father's prayers, then understanding of dependence on God is formed in her heart and that only He is the doer of all goods and indisputable Authority for all living.

The role of the father as priest in the family builds in the daughter's mind the image of a spiritual leader to whom one can turn with many important questions and receive correct answers.

A father who always keeps his word and fulfills what he promises creates in the girl's consciousness a solid foundation for all her expectations. It will be very easy for her to accept that if her father is so faithful to his words, then the Heavenly Father will also fulfill what He promised in His word.

Wise fatherly instructions, with the support and reminder of the Holy Spirit, will guide the girl's life until old age and she will be able to pass these instructions on to her children.

A daughter loved by her father knows that her value consists not in her achievements, appearance or success, but in how unique and irreplaceable a personality she is in her family. Such a daughter understands that a man in the family is support, encouragement, inspirer, comforter, a treasury of ideas and one on whom you can always rely.

The world will always impose its values and offer its stereotypes, but with a wise father a girl will always be protected from harmful influence and her father will always show her a different view of many things and protect her consciousness from many temptations.

A woman's happiness takes its beginning in the parental home from relationships with father and mother. When a girl knows that her father always loves and accepts her, this gives her such strength that she is able to overcome and endure everything, even when it's very hard. And spiritual foundation opens to her the path to complete trust in God, Who is always near and will always protect when something goes wrong.

The father's gentleness and tenderness and, at the same time, his firmness and justice in observing God's principles help the daughter realize the importance and immutability of God's commandments and recommendations and give understanding of how tenderly the Lord loves all His children and carries them in His arms.

The father is also a protector of his daughter, both in the physical world and from spiritual attacks from outside. He is always near and when necessary takes her in his arms, making

it clear that her safety is in reliable hands. And the father's prayers in such cases teach girls to find refuge in God.

The father's honesty in all matters teaches the daughter to be the same principled and virtuous woman. She is not afraid of responsibility because she has a positive example in her parents' lives.

God-fearing father and mother have a goal in their influence and upbringing, so that their children at the right time will make their personal covenant with God and build their personal relationships with the true Head of their church.

A wise father, engaging in raising his daughter, teaches her to make right decisions, choosing her life path, helps in choosing further education, profession, place of work, and also gives valuable advice in choosing a life companion and how to behave in the company of the opposite sex.

A loving father teaches his daughter to be feminine and shares with her the masculine worldview on feminine beauty, on assessment of dignity, on what she should not be and what men like in women. "The words of the wise are like nails driven in" remain in the daughter's heart for many years and protect from many mistakes.

And if problems occur, then from the father's example the daughter was taught not to sigh from what happened, but to seek wise solution and way out of any situation.

The woman from the 31st chapter of the book of Proverbs clearly demonstrates to us what those girls achieve who had wise and God-fearing fathers who taught their daughter to be an example for all future generations.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Ephesians 5:25; Job 42:13-15; 3 John 1:4; Genesis 46:6-7; Numbers 30:4-6; Deuteronomy 23:17; Psalm 77:5-7; 143:12; Isaiah 60:4; Joel 2:28; Acts 21:8-9, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?

4. Do you think that a virtuous and righteous wife is someone's daughter?
5. Why is the father's role considered so important in the life and upbringing of a daughter for God?
6. How does the father's love for the mother influence the formation of the daughter's worldview?
7. Why do girls, observing their parents' relationships, form a stable model of future family?
8. Can the absence of fatherly love influence a girl's desire to seek attention on the side?
9. Why is it important for a father to openly express his love to his daughter?
10. How does a father help his daughter realize the immutability of God's principles?
11. How does a father influence his daughter's perception of femininity and beauty?
12. What qualities are cultivated in a girl through observing her father's example?
13. How does a father teach his daughter to seek solutions rather than dwell on problems?
14. How does the father's example help a daughter become the woman from Proverbs chapter 31?

## The Father's Role in His Son's Life

The father's role in raising a child, by many criteria, doesn't differ from the mother's role when they together do everything that depends on them for raising their children. But each parent has their own characteristics that the other doesn't have, so children need both feminine and masculine participation in forming a complete character.

The father's influence on his son is just as strong and important as on his daughter and in many spheres of personality formation it doesn't differ at all. But the very fact that the father is an adult man, and his son is a little man who is only learning to live, greatly influences the son's inheritance of masculine qualities that his mother can never give him.

If children are not raised at all, but only fed and clothed, then they will somehow grow up, but what they will be in adult life is not difficult to imagine.

A son doesn't choose his parents, and parents will receive in their old age what they raise. Someone said that parents shouldn't spend much time on raising children because their children will be like them anyway. The influence and personal example of father and mother's relationships, in all spheres of life, leaves an indelible trace in the child's consciousness. The growing mind is arranged to be transformed into what it looks upon.

Boys tend to respect stronger guys and they like to imitate courageous men. And a believing father is precisely that clear example of strength of spirit, will, love and physical activity, which he skillfully applies for constructive purposes without aggression. The son sees how daddy knows how to make decisions and solve complex questions, and remembers many moments from the father's behavior to later try them in his own life.

Being a spiritual leader and mentor, a believing father teaches his son how the family priest should behave, what personal relationships he has with God, how he prays for all family

members and how he conducts home spiritual gatherings. And it is precisely the father who gives his son an example of spiritual leadership and teaches him to take responsibility for this role as head of the family.

The father teaches his son discipline and, as a rule, is the strict authority for carrying out all kinds of punishments. The father's requirements for children's behavior are always strict, but they skillfully combine respect, wisdom, gentleness, love and principled stance.

The father is the protector of his family not only from physical attacks, but also from any evil spirit or ungodly influence from outside. He foresees danger and does everything possible so that no evil touches members of his family. Sons seeing such a fatherly approach to life begin to imitate the strong daddy in their behavior.

Of course, physical culture and all kinds of sports activities are more in the father's prerogative, and are very simply and wisely passed on to sons, where daddy not only teaches to overcome physical loads, but also explains the benefit from such training and teaches that strength is needed to protect the weak and help the exhausted.

In respectful and loving attitude toward his wife, daughters, his mother, the father lays in his son's heart a model of similar attitude toward women, and toward that girl who will be chosen by him to create his family. The father also teaches that the most important thing a husband should understand is his responsibility before Heaven, before his wife and before those children whom God will give them.

As a rule, fathers spend most of their time away from home at work, which teaches the son that he will also have to take care of himself and his family, earning daily bread and means for living by the sweat of his brow. If mom, by circumstances, is not employed, then over time the son begins to understand where money comes from at home and who is their main provider, which prepares the young mind for similar responsibility in his own family. And such influence of the father is so convincing for

his son that when creating his own family, the young man will not argue with his wife about who will earn in their family.

This question is already written in his heart by his father's hand and he joyfully enters this role of provider and doesn't force his wife to pull this harness equally with him.

There are many types of work at home and outside it that are traditionally performed by men and the father plays an irreplaceable role of teacher and mentor in this, freeing the feminine half from such activities. And in this work the father teaches his son to wisely approach solving various questions, find ways out of difficult situations, take responsibility and achieve successful completion of work by the set time. The father instills in his son respect for labor and teaches him not to be afraid of difficult work that eyes fear but hands do.

Men are more resistant to emotional expression of their thoughts and feelings. The father passes this skill to his son, showing by personal example how to resist evil and calmly endure many trials. The father teaches that strength is not in anger and shouting, but in the ability to restrain oneself when feelings want to break out.

A believing father teaches his son by his personal example to honor God, serve Him, worship in spirit and truth. All spiritual instructions of the father, supported by God's Word, will have their influence on the son's formation and will help the young man in the future make right decisions. The young man learns to be courageous and submissive to God.

The father teaches his son healthy competition, where any rivalry is not humiliation of another, but improvement of oneself, that honesty in life and affairs should always be a priority, even if this doesn't bring desired profit. After all, truthfulness will preserve the honor and dignity of any person, and respect for freedom of choice will add many new friends.

The father teaches his son to calculate his steps ahead and make plans for the future, and then confidently carry out what was planned and be consistent.

By the example of communication and friendship with other men, the father clearly shows his son the power of friendliness, faithfulness in relationships, mutuality of love and how the Lord brings together such people in whom many recognize Christ's disciples.

In many life questions the father teaches his son to make independent decisions and independence from others' opinions, to build his own life and not live by other people's expectations. This makes the young man a mature and self-confident man who, at the same time, knows how to rely on God in everything.

Teaching financial literacy is one of many sciences that the father teaches his boy for a long time, initially giving an example with small amounts given just like that, teaching how to properly manage this, and then expanding this to more complex tasks, such as budget planning, savings and investments.

The father, being the leader of the family and acting as head, gives his son an idea of what a real man should be like. All those spiritual values and principles that are manifested in daddy's life have special significance for his son. Only a father can form masculine identity in his son because he is a clear example of courage, faithfulness, responsibility and faith, which is very valuable in Heaven's eyes.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Genesis 18:19; Proverbs 14:26; 17:6; 19:18; 20:7,29; 23:24; 29:17; 1 Timothy 5:8; Nehemiah 4:14; Psalm 126:4; 127:3-4; 143:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Do you think a father can replace a mother in upbringing matters, and if yes, in what situations?
5. What does it mean to be a spiritual leader and mentor for your son?
6. Why does a son imitate his father more than his mother?

7. How can a father teach his son to make decisions in difficult situations?
8. What masculine qualities can a father pass to his son that a mother cannot give?
9. How does a father form respectful attitude toward women in his son?
10. Is it important for a father to show his son how to love his wife and care for her?
11. What can't a mother give her son? Why is it so important that a father also influence the young man's upbringing?
12. How important is it for a father to spend time with his son despite being busy?
13. Is there anything common between the earthly father's influence and the Heavenly Father's influence?
14. What should mothers do who have no husbands but have little sons?

## What Mother Gives to Children

Believing father and mother are irreplaceable in their families and each of these parents has a special God-given purpose in the work of raising their children for God. Each of them contributes to the formation of a complete personality and worthy character for life, not only in this world, but also among Heavenly beings.

The father passes to children those many qualities and skills of his soul that only a man can have. And the mother is that representative of Divine qualities of unconditional love that the father cannot give, despite all his desire.

The very first such distinction is carrying the fetus in the womb and breastfeeding. A man, by his physiology, will never take this place.

During the feeding of an infant, the mother not only gives the child necessary nutrition, but at the same time she lays the foundations of psychological and emotional health, gives lessons of tenderness, comfort, compassion and care, instills in the psyche of the growing little person a sense of security and comfort. All these skills are embedded in every female nature and God's power awakens them and brings them into action when the first children are born. And sometimes, women themselves are surprised by what new feelings begin to overcome them during childbirth.

When you ask someone what tenderness is and what it can be compared to, the first thing that comes to mind for all respondents is maternal love and care for a nursing baby. Although a person may not remember what it was like in his case, but observing this process in the lives of other women, he understands how close this is to him.

The concept of "maternal love" has taken such firm root in every culture that it speaks for itself about the difference between mother and father and what is more in her. Her unconditional love forms in children the concept of God's mercy and grace. And it will not be difficult for them to understand

how the Lord has mercy on a sinner if they had this example in their home.

The mother's emotional closeness forms a basic sense of security and the child knows where to run in case of anxiety or danger.

It is characteristic for a woman to show compassion for the concerns of her little ones, sensitivity to their needs, understanding of their fears and experiences. She is very attentive to everything that concerns her children and to what happens in their mood and well-being. Many such feelings are not characteristic of fathers and they approach children's cough or runny nose much more simply, believing that children should be hardened from a young age and accustomed to a Spartan lifestyle, regardless of the latter's displeasure.

The mother knows how to convince her husband that little children need special treatment and one should not experiment with their health and endurance.

If you ask a father to walk the baby, he will take the child and necessary toys for the walk and will not burden himself with anything else. The mother, however, will pack a bag in which she will put drinks and food, spare diapers and clothes, necessary creams and wipes, and much of what might be needed in an emergency. And the child knows perfectly well whom to go to in case of thirst or wet pants.

The mother knows how to listen and delve into all children's needs and concerns. She is very attentive to all the experiences of her household and always finds the right answer, or words of support, comfort or inspiration. Even despite poor health, she will always find strength to help and serve those who are in her power.

The mother's patience and meticulousness help her deeply understand children's needs and solve many issues at a deep level, which is not characteristic of many men.

Who is the first to react to the noise or cry of an infant at night? Of course, mom. She is able to hear and distinguish her child's

voice from a thousand other voices and immediately determine whether he is in danger and what he needs at this time.

A woman's ability to create coziness and comfort in her place of residence and stay is not characteristic of men. Her love for cleanliness and order, for aesthetics and warmth, are a natural way of feminine thinking. And children learn this quality from the life and example of their mother.

It is characteristic for a woman to resolve many conflicts through dialogue and understanding, through gentleness in settling disagreements. This teaches her children tolerance and a wiser approach in solving many problems.

The mother is constantly with small children, not letting them out of her sight for a second. She perfectly hears all the noises made in the house, being able to distinguish danger from games, and immediately reacts to suspicious silence, wanting to understand where her beloved child has climbed once again.

The mother teaches children to rejoice in what is happening here and now, to enjoy life, to invent spontaneous games and to value their parents' company.

Mom, through games and all kinds of activities, very actively participates in forming children's creative thinking and creative approach to life. This greatly helps young students to invent many things and practice new ideas.

The mother's entire life is her continuous sacrifice for the good and happiness of her children and her family. She often forgets about her needs and desires and lives for someone else. This is noticeable during meals, where mom always sits at the table last, when everyone has everything.

By her delicacy and femininity, the mother teaches children the culture of communication, correct expression of their thoughts and feelings, competent construction of speech. She gives lessons on the distinction between good and evil and instills in children sensitivity to other people's needs and understanding of the meaning of any communication.

Hygiene of soul and body also lies at the foundation of maternal care for children. She instills in consciousness the first laws of cleanliness and hygiene, teaching that face and hands, body and clothes always need to be washed and put in order if they get dirty.

We are not surprised when we see neat and clean people. And this is not their own merit, but the merit of those mothers who instilled these skills from childhood and instilled wisdom and love for hygiene.

It is characteristic for women to simultaneously think about many problems and engage in many tasks. By her flexibility in approach to many questions, she teaches children not to fear an abundance of tasks, but to tackle their solution and bring started things to completion. She patiently explains how to manage and how to properly plan one's time.

As a rule, mom is the founder of all family rituals, traditions and holidays, bringing her emotional position and support into this. This brings all family members closer and accustoms them to value these establishments and through them show mutual love and respect for each other.

The father, by his love and wisdom, can earn authority in his family, but only his wise wife can affirm and build the father's authority.

A believing mother teaches children how to properly deal with anger, fear, irritation, sadness and offenses, giving examples from Biblical narratives and drawing strength for overcoming these problems in prayer to God.

The mother is not only a teacher in life matters, but also a spiritual mentor to her children in matters of faith. By her personal example, she lays truths in children's consciousness that God must be trusted in everything, that all questions can be resolved with Him, and one can plan their future.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Luke 2:51; Isa. 49:15; 66:13; Prov. 1:8-9; 6:20-21; 31:6; 14:1; 31:24-31; 2 Tim. 1:5; 1 Thess. 2:7; Ps. 113:9; Lev. 19:3; Titus 2:4-5, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. How does maternal love differ from paternal love?
5. How does the example of maternal love help children understand God's mercy and grace?
6. Why is the mother's emotional closeness an important factor for forming the child's personality?
7. How does the mother manage to combine multiple tasks and maintain attention to the needs of all family members?
8. Why is the mother associated with the concept of home comfort and warmth?
9. Why does the mother's patience play a key role in upbringing?
10. What benefit do children receive from maternal flexibility in approach to problem solving?
11. How does the example of maternal service help children grow up to be loving and caring people?
12. What should you do if you understand that your life does not correspond to what you read in this lesson?
13. Can a father replace a mother for children and give them what is usually received from a mother?
14. How can one become a proper mother if there was no appropriate example and influence in my life?

## A Look into the Future

Everything we do or don't do in this world, everything we read, watch and listen to, everything we write, show or say, in one way or another affects ourselves and those who are touched by what we do. It is written in Romans 14:12 that we will give account to God for everything. And what this account will be like, we decide here and now.

When we create a family, we take responsibility for the happiness and life of another person, for their health and spiritual state. But that's not all. Union with a marriage partner leads to new people being born into the world, who depend entirely on us and become what we make them.

Parents initially do not have the fullness of wisdom in raising children, and may make serious mistakes, but they are not alone involved in this process. When they choose God's way and God's methods, then the Three most powerful Forces in the entire Universe and the entire army of ministering spirits sent to those who will inherit salvation begin to cooperate with them.

Any upbringing of children brings exactly the fruit that was sown and grown. Although freedom of choice gives any child the right to choose their own path and build their life as they see fit, they will always be guided by those principles, habits and rules that were laid in them by their parents.

God knows when and how much light inexperienced parents received, how they used the revelations received and how they embodied new knowledge into life. He remembers all their prayers and the absence of such. And someday every father or mother will be asked the question: "Where is that child whom I entrusted to you?" What the answer will be depends on many factors.

God is Love, and such questions will come from a loving heart. The Lord knows all the difficulties and temptations we faced. He gives us the gift of repentance and accepts it when we, realizing our weakness and worthlessness, tearfully ask Him to

show mercy to us and save us from ourselves. A loving Heavenly Father will not finish us off out of a desire to take revenge for our mistakes, but will accept us and wipe away every tear. But if we, being unfaithful stewards and educators, try to justify our ignorance and present ourselves as righteous and holy, then we will have to face God's justice and taste its power.

There is another side of responsibility before God, when parents did everything possible to preserve their children from all evil, applied all their efforts and wisdom to put the most important, valuable and necessary things into young consciousness, devoted all their time and means to give children the necessary knowledge, but at the same time understand how much more could have been done, what they irretrievably missed, then God will have a special attitude toward this category of people and will show them how Heaven evaluated their work and how it answered their prayers.

Investing the best and most precious in our children, we do not know how this will be evaluated, what path they will choose and what influence, ultimately, all our efforts will have.

But let's try to imagine a little what Eternity is? It is very much, it is much more and better than the boldest imagination can conceive. It is worth fighting for, to get into it and enter there not from the last strength, like a brand plucked from the fire, but as a victor, with the banner of love and in full armor of God.

How pleasant and joyful it will be for every father and mother, entering into Eternity, to say: "Here am I and my children, whom You entrusted to me!"

What could be better than spending all Eternity alongside those whom the Lord gave you to raise, in whom the best feelings and means were invested, whom your soul loves so much?

If you ask any parents with many children which of their children they love most, they will of course say that they love all equally, but the most dear to them will be those to whom the most love and care was shown, who was most often in their

prayers and instructions. We love more those in whom we invest more.

You should not worry about the good seed that was sown in children's hearts.

You should not suffer because, with all the right upbringing, children chose the wrong path. You do not know how the Lord grows the good seed and at what time it will bring forth good fruit. Perhaps in this life many of you are not destined to see the fruits of your good influence, but do not despair, we have a God Who knows how to answer our prayers even after our death.

But the most important thing is that you understand that Eternity will be the most beautiful place for you, not when your children will be there, but because Jesus will be there. Children will only be able to share with you your joy from the awareness of eternal God's presence, which they, like you, will experience. They will also have personal relationships with their Savior and rejoice that He kept them in this world from evil and saved them.

Raising children in God's Spirit and with the desire to make them worthy citizens not only of this world, but also of the coming Kingdom, will bring good reward not only in Eternity, but also in earthly life.

Loving parents will be pleased to observe how right feelings and motives for good manifest in their child, how lessons of obedience, patience and diligence will be reflected in their attitude toward other people. How all good words and manners become part of their nature. How in their children you will receive gratitude for all your sleepless nights, for vigils in prayer, for strictness and unconditional love.

The influence of loving father and mother who believe in God and cooperate with Him is the most powerful force that, in combination with God's influence, will produce in your children far more important decisions and actions than you imagine. But the last word remains with the child's choice.

Remember that you are raising a person not for yourself, but for God, and your task includes helping them to be independent of no one except God and self-sufficient under any conditions.

Just as in due time an eagle pushes its chicks out of the cozy nest and pushes them into the abyss so they will fly, so you will someday have to declare to your grown children that they are now free to choose their further life path as they decide and prayerfully observe what they will choose and where they will direct their wings.

God will bless every effort of yours and every investment that will serve for the good of developing a God-fearing character.

The finish line is not so far away and you should not give up when the reward for labor is very close.

If I have a wise and detailed plan for building a beautiful house, have sufficient means and strength to build what I conceived, if I persistently engage in this matter, then I do not expect at the end of my construction to see a half-dead barn or a tumbledown hut. I will get in reality what was in the plan on paper, if I do everything as it was written and calculated.

Do not be afraid to raise your children as the Lord advises. Believe Him and be firm, believe His prophets and you will have success, sow good seed and you will reap a good harvest.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Isaiah 8:18; Matthew 12:36; 25:21; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Galatians 6:7; 2 Timothy 4:7-8; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Philippians 1:6; Psalm 126:1; Joshua 24:15; 2 Chronicles 20:20, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Why will every person give account to God for their life?
5. How do marriage and having children increase a person's responsibility before God?
6. Why is it important to instill right principles in children from an early age?

7. Will God take into account the level of understanding of parents in their account before Him?
8. Why can children choose the wrong path even with proper upbringing?
9. Why is it important to trust God even when the fruits of upbringing are not yet visible?
10. How can God answer parental prayers even after their death?
11. Why is the most important thing in eternity the presence of Jesus?
12. Why should we not be afraid to raise children as the Lord advises?
13. Why should parents help children become independent of people, but dependent on God?
14. Do you think you will be successful if you do everything according to God's plan?

## Deficit of Silence and Peace

The child's organism develops according to certain rules and laws that God has embedded in our physiology. They are simple and understandable to anyone who wants to study them and delve into them. They do not require large capital investments and are always accessible to anyone who desires.

Silence and peace are the best environment for full and harmonious growth and development of children. Silence is the absence of noise and irritants to the nervous system, and this is not simply the absence of sounds, but a state of inner and outer peace, when nothing distracts, pressures, or overloads the senses. It can be physical—with the complete absence of any sounds. Emotional—when there is peace and tranquility in the heart, absence of anxiety and bustle, even when it's noisy around. Spiritual—when the heart is free from fear, and consciousness can hear God's voice, receive instruction from above and know the greatness of the Creator.

There are natural sounds that do not carry emotional burden and have a beneficial effect on children's psyche and give a sense of peace and tranquility—these are the sound of wind in tree leaves, the sound of falling and flowing water, bird songs, the rustle of fallen leaves underfoot.

And what surrounds the modern child living in large cities? Traffic noise, siren wails, an abundance of advertisements and bright posters, urban rush and bustle, sounds of popular music from all sides, shining and flashing lights, all kinds of attractions and entertainment events. Although this may not come crashing down all at once and at one time, and noise differs from noise, such irritants do exist in city life. But even in such conditions, one must learn to protect their children from any harmful influence from outside.

And what fills the everyday life of an ordinary modern person? A turned-on television, sounds of radio or pop music, movies and cartoons, mobile internet on tablets and smartphones, computer games and much more that brings certain

unnecessary noise and excessive bustle into the lives of growing children. Although a moderate level of background of all kinds of sounds will not cause significant harm to the child's emotional health.

And how does a child begin to come into contact with the world of artificial irritants? Mom feeds the baby and at the same time watches and listens to something on her phone or communicates with someone. The child feels the physical presence of mom, but loses her emotionally. And all artificial sounds carry certain information that child perception is not able to process, and unnecessary burden is created for the nervous system and the child feels discomfort. Their mind well senses the home atmosphere, how peaceful or toxic it is, and friendly conversational speech and quiet music calm them.

A child adapts to any conditions of the environment into which they are born, but not every environment has a beneficial influence on the development of healthy psyche and receptivity of a growing person.

Many parents believe that the highest quality time spent with their children is visiting attractions, cinemas, children's and entertainment programs, circuses and other events, and do not think about what happens to their children's feelings? Besides this, little ones are enrolled in all kinds of clubs, circles, classes, lessons of everything under the sun, and parents are proud that their children have no free time for harmless children's games. And the child has nowhere to go and actively works with all their might trying to master all sciences, understand the meaning of everything, try everything and learn everything. As a result, the nervous system accumulates emotional fatigue, to someday resist such violence and loudly declare its malfunction.

In the natural environment of development, children's psyche alternates active phases: games, communication, learning and periods of rest. If this balance is disturbed, the child becomes hyperactive, nervous, finds it difficult to play quiet games, concentrate attention, show perseverance, and cannot tell parents about their problem, but simply begins to behave in a

way that parents don't like, and they turn on cartoons or let them play computer games to somehow calm them down and give themselves rest from their presence.

The conditions for developing a child's organism and nervous system differ significantly from the already formed organism of an adult. Although parents also need silence and peace, their psyche is more stress-resistant to external factors than their growing child.

Natural silence and peace, away from artificial irritants, have a beneficial effect on the growth and development of a healthy organism. Internal resources and creative potential come into action and the child invents thousands of activities and games out of thin air. In a calm environment, they learn to analyze their actions and feelings, reflect on what they've lived through, think up something original, think and dream about something new and interesting. Their psyche develops harmoniously in a quiet and loving home atmosphere. They are capable of learning many good manners and developing comprehensively to the joy of parents.

Peace brings with it a sense of security, and emotionally available parents dispel all accidental fears and anxieties.

It is difficult for the enemy of the soul to find an approach to the heart of a child growing in silence and peace of a happy God-fearing atmosphere.

Reading the Bible in the family circle, joyful communication, friendly spirit, simplicity of home environment—all this teaches the child that there is something very valuable in this world that one needs to have in their home and keep in their heart.

Jesus invites all who labor and are heavy laden to come to Him, to find that peace which every soul needs. These words were spoken at a time when there was no radio, television and internet, and people already needed peace. What can we say about our time and about our children who cannot protect themselves and choose something useful?

What do children want most after visiting festivities and pompous events? Silence and peace. Their organism has protective properties and can activate them even amid great noise—the child simply falls asleep in their parents' arms and no longer reacts to anything. If this doesn't happen, they may begin to act up and have tantrums so much that parents will have to take extreme measures or leave places of entertainment against their will.

If artificial noise and the presence of external irritants around the child are constant, then their psyche becomes overloaded, exhausted and cannot recover naturally. Then all kinds of surprises and illnesses occur that bewilder and sadden parents.

Create such conditions for your children that silence and peace are always available to them and surround them on all sides. Let peace not only be their dream, but also be available to them at all times.

To avoid extremes, it's worth noting that creating absolute silence is also not good. A child should learn about the world of sounds, distinguish them and react correctly to this environment.

Gadgets are not absolute evil, but a means of transmitting information, which wise parents can successfully control and use for the benefit of themselves and their children in early childhood.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Matthew 11:28-30; Isaiah 30:15; Mark 1:35; 6:31; Psalm 4:9; 45:11; 118:165; Ephesians 6:4; 1 Kings 19:11-12; Proverbs 17:1; Ecclesiastes 4:6; Colossians 3:15; Philippians 4:7, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Why are silence and peace important conditions for harmonious growth and development of children?
5. What is the difference and advantages between natural and artificial developmental environment for children?

6. Why can background noise be harmful, even if it doesn't seem loud?
7. How can parents create conditions for silence and peace in their home?
8. How does the deficit of silence and peace affect children's behavior?
9. What biblical principles confirm the importance of peace?
10. Why does Jesus invite people to come to Him to find peace? Does this invitation extend to children?
11. How can noisy entertainment be replaced with useful activities?
12. What should I do if I live and raise children in a place where there is a lot of noise, but I don't have the means to move?
13. How can we teach a child to value silence and consciously find time for peace?
14. Are you surrounded by silence?

## Childhood Diseases

Jesus taught that the last times would be distinguished from all previous times by the special presence of all kinds of diseases. We live in this epoch and from our own experience see the fulfillment of these prophecies. Sometimes we cannot even determine whether these diseases come into our lives naturally or whether the accomplices of the enemy of the soul purposefully harm humanity.

The Lord gave us a unique body and embedded in it all kinds of protective functions of the organism that can themselves determine danger and resist it.

In addition to this, the Lord determined auxiliary means that will maintain the health of any person at the proper level and help the internal forces of the organism resist many ailments. These allies include such natural factors as: sunlight, clean air, clean water, clean environment, natural food products. Human factors: beneficially prepared food, physical activity, hardening, moderation in everything, refusal of what destroys and kills, rest, cleanliness and hygiene, absence of sources of stress and faith in God.

Any child born into the world receives as a gift an earthly body in which the soul and spirit of a person can dwell. And this miracle of creation is transferred into the power of parents, on whom responsibility before God is placed for proper care and worthy upbringing.

As a rule, young parents do not yet have personal experience in raising and caring for an infant. But here intuition, kindhearted parents, all kinds of advisors and friends who have experienced a similar event come to their aid. But the best help is the knowledge that young father and mother managed to acquire by studying the science of childbirth and child-rearing, using the works of wise specialists in this field.

But still, when your tiny creation begins to get sick, many young mothers tend to panic and lose peace, searching for the right solution and way out.

Diseases and their course can differ from one another based on the degree of danger and the strength of resistance of the child's organism. The intestines of an infant whose mother breastfeeds are very susceptible to what the mother eats, because mother's milk transmits to the child the entire diet, all acids and vitamins that entered the nursing mother's stomach.

A sensitive woman immediately reacts to the baby's mood and begins to look for the cause of their inadequate behavior or condition.

They say that if something doesn't kill us, it makes us stronger. The human immune system works on this principle. Any virus, pathogen, infection or foreign bacteria, getting into the organism, is immediately recognized by immunity, which enters into battle with the danger and begins to destroy the enemy, creating new antibodies that will subsequently immediately destroy the familiar enemy, as they have it in memory. But this victory does not always happen quickly. Immunity needs time to create what will successfully defeat the disease. How does this look in life? A child who has suffered some infectious or viral disease, as a rule, no longer gets sick with the same disease, as their immunity immediately recognized the familiar enemy and destroyed it upon repeated contact.

But a person who has recovered or is sick can become a carrier of their disease and transmit it to other people in various ways, without suspecting it themselves, and the virus, passing from one child to another, infects everything weak and accessible.

Children, coming into contact with other children, as a rule exchange their diseases and their immunity reacts to everything new and unfamiliar and turns on new protective properties of the organism and remembers everything it encountered.

Vaccinations can also influence the formation of protective properties of the organism, but currently are quite a controversial topic, as they can cause undesirable side effects. But at the same time, it's important to consider that in some

cases they are prevention of deadly dangerous diseases and contribute to protection from known diseases.

The safest and most effective means in fighting diseases are God's factors and principles that He gave to the world through Health Reform and teaches us not only to treat disease, but also to understand where they come from and how to resist them.

Fresh clean air, clean water, proper nutrition and sunlight successfully neutralize many diseases in their very embryo. Many herbs contain such forces of nature that, with wise application, help the organism emerge from the most complex and dangerous diseases. And prayer and trust in God can work miracles in the most hopeless situations.

But despite the abundance of auxiliary and natural means, our children still get sick, and sometimes are even born with congenital defects or with limited abilities. And if someone has a healthy baby, doctors already consider this a miracle and rejoice at such luck. But an infant's health is, as a rule, not an accident, but the result of wise and correct lifestyle of both parents.

Many sinful dependencies and inclinations of parents can be passed on to their generations, and for many parental "whys" one should look for the answer in their own lives.

Any mother finds it easier to get sick herself than to see her child suffer. But previously acquired knowledge helps make wise decisions and find a wise approach to caring for a sick child.

Calling or visiting a pediatrician or family doctor can also become necessary in complex cases, but may not always be the best solution, as a doctor is also human, who can make mistakes and suggest treatment methods that may contradict parents' principles, but in serious situations the Lord allows traditional medicine to interfere in the course of disease and save a child's life from inevitable death or resist dangerous viral infection in a generally recognized way.

When giving a child any medications, parents need to be guided not only by feelings, but also understand that the disease is caused not by the absence and deficiency of these drugs, but by some violation, and it's more important to establish the cause of the disease and eliminate it. But one should not underestimate the actions of recognized medications either.

If you have healthy children, do not be proud of this and do not consider yourself wiser than those whose one disease is replaced by another.

The healer of any disease is God, Who allows someone to be sick and die, and can heal someone by prayer of faith at any stage or not allow any ailment into your life at all. He watches how His children accept the light of Sanitary Reform and live in it.

Prayer of faith works miracles, but it is not a panacea for all diseases. If there are gross violations of health principles, then faith in God will not give you healing and you should not tempt the Lord in your ignorance, asking Him to perform a miracle of healing while ignoring the laws of health.

But when a mother does everything possible on her part and is powerless before the approaching catastrophe, then her prayer of faith will be heard, but what the answer will be—let this right remain in God's power.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Matthew 8:14-17; 24:8; Exodus 15:26; Proverbs 4:20-22; 17:22; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Psalm 90:9-10; 102:3; 146:3; Malachi 4:2; Genesis 3:16; Revelation 21:4, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Why did Jesus warn that in the last times there would be more diseases?
5. What factors influence the spread of diseases in the modern world?
6. Why do children get sick?

7. How does nutrition with mother's milk affect a breastfed baby's immunity?
8. What habits can weaken a child's immunity?
9. Why is it important not only to treat symptoms, but also to eliminate the causes of diseases?
10. How can prayer and faith in God help in a child's recovery?
11. What biblical principles of health help prevent diseases?
12. Why doesn't God always answer positively to prayer for healing?
13. Is there any correlation between violation of health laws and disease?
14. For what purpose was health reform given?

## Neural Connections

The human organism is so unique in its design and so wonderfully thought out that it needs no addition, and also has nothing superfluous and unnecessary. But what it needs most is for us to know and understand how it is arranged and what is needed for its normal work, what harms it and what brings benefit, and under what conditions it can serve itself with quality and be a blessing to others.

As a rule, young parents do not know how a little person is arranged, what processes occur in their body and in what sequence the growth of various organs takes place. The inner world is shrouded in mystery, but we live in the age of enlightenment and if one really wants to, one can break down any person into atoms and examine them comprehensively in 3D format. But for some reason not everyone wants to study their structure, and when a child is born, parents are more interested in the color of rompers and photographs from all sides than in the laws of development and growth.

And how one wants their child to be special, to possess some unique abilities and amaze everyone with their talents. And to achieve this dream and show up other people, parents begin to load little ones with such programs of busyness and education that sometimes you don't know what's better to do: cry from such tyranny over young consciousness or rejoice that such talents are growing in the country.

God embedded certain cycles of body growth, nervous system strengthening and mental development in the child's organism, and if someone doesn't want to consider this and help the child develop contrary to these laws, then later one shouldn't be surprised by sad consequences and undesired fruits.

Neural connections in a person's mind are connections between brain cells that are formed and strengthened when learning anything, when repeating any actions, when expressing emotions and doing everything that is inherent to humans.

At the first attempt of an infant to learn something, neural pathways form between brain cells, connecting into a certain path from area A to area B. And with frequent repetition these pathways are strengthened and become wide highways for rapid delivery of information and its exchange between parts of the brain, called myelination.

Let's trace by example how this happens and how quickly neural connections help a child learn the art of living. The first steps are very difficult and look like swaying on a ship during a storm. But the little one walks to the joyful exclamations of father and mother and doesn't give up. The second attempt is more successful. Time passes and the child already runs confidently and doesn't intend to fall. A neural connection for walking has formed in their brain and it has become so strong that they will never forget this ability, and daily repetition of this process will only strengthen the brain's neural connections and bring these actions to automation. The rest of the assimilation of incoming information works on the same principle. The child sees an action or object that their parents voice, and the brain creates another neural connection, which upon the next reminder of these things reproduces their outline and logical connection in the mind. For example, reading these words that I write, your mind immediately immerses them in the world of neural networks, and they instantly deliver them to consciousness and present them to you in all the beauty of your imagination.

God also embedded in us a mechanism of forgetting that protects us from unnecessary information and from its excess. During sleep, global cleansing of consciousness occurs and rebooting of the nervous system. Melatonin restores many damages, the lymphatic system removes the excess of unnecessary neural connections and what is not in demand in life.

For example, a child learns a foreign language but doesn't use it in practical life, then over time they naturally forget the studied material, as neural connections weaken and unnecessary connections collapse due to lack of practice.

Although some words and foreign expressions can remain forever in deep layers of memory and be stored there until needed.

If parents once gave a little one instruction about some rule but didn't reinforce it in the child's consciousness through frequent repetition and reminding, then it's possible that their child will forget this and won't even try to fulfill it. In their mind this simply doesn't exist, the neural connection didn't have time to form and strengthen and was erased due to uselessness, and a strict father may consider ignoring the rules as disobedience and punish the child, as the adult memory recorded that the rule was pronounced clearly and distinctly, and the little one nodded affirmatively and answered that everything was clear to them.

A child keeps many things in memory and remembers much more than we imagine, but if these neural connections are not reinforced through repetition and reminding, then they may simply not work at the right time and your listener simply won't understand what is required of them.

A child's character and personality are formed gradually, unhurriedly, and one shouldn't get ahead of those biochemical processes that occur in the mind of the young creation. If a child is sent to school early or begins to be taught exact sciences or grammar, then it's worth understanding that the young mind has not yet sufficiently formed to process received information and correctly distribute it.

If you decided to delay the beginning of the school epic and let the child's organism properly mature, then they will assimilate and process received information much faster and with better quality than it would have been at an early stage of development.

I'll give an example. If you plant a tomato in the ground early, then all kinds of temperature fluctuations can disrupt its growth or destroy it altogether. But when you put a seed in warm soil, at the height of spring, the growth of this plant occurs much

faster, and the fruits turn out tastier than those of the earlier greenhouse counterpart.

Parents should study the temporal conditions of child organism and consciousness development and not make a child prodigy or Olympic champion out of the developing person. Let them be an ordinary child growing in the natural environment of love and respect.

Children are very curious and they can already know all letters and numbers at 4 years old, but this doesn't mean they are ready for school load. Don't rush events. If a child wants to study something themselves, then give them this opportunity and let them study the Bible, then their neural connections will form those paths that won't overtire their nervous system.

If you see that it's difficult for your little one to assimilate the offered material and they simply don't understand what they're trying to explain to them, then be condescending to their perception, their mind has not yet developed to the needed level.

And if a child is reproached for their lack of understanding, then an undesired neural connection may develop in them that they can't do anything and they will affirm themselves in this rule and it will be difficult for parents to destroy this setting.

Praise, approval, love and friendly spirit open the child's heart to many possibilities and teach the child many good manners in the natural habitat.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Ephesians 4:15-16; Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Proverbs 3:1-2; 4:13; 22:6; Isaiah 28:10; Philippians 1:6; 4:9; Matthew 7:24-25; 13:12; John 14:26, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What are neural connections and how do they form in the brain?
5. Why are neural connections so important for learning and memorization?

6. Why is it important for children to repeat what they heard to remember better?
7. Can the process of neural connection formation be accelerated?
8. Why can early learning overload a child's brain?
9. How does regular Bible study affect the development of neural connections?
10. Why is it important for a child to hear the same instructions several times?
11. How does lack of practice affect forgetting studied material?
12. Why is it difficult for a child to assimilate new information if their brain has not yet matured for this?
13. How can fears and negative experiences form stable neural connections?
14. Can stress destroy or weaken neural connections?
15. Was this book useful for you?