

Face yourself

• *God* •
is Light

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God is Light. This definition of the Lord has become so customary to us that we rarely think of its true deep meaning. However, this meaning is deep indeed, incredibly deep.

The Highest of Heights

A human being tends to look for ‘better’: a more handsome and kind spouse, a more loyal friend, a more gifted writer or singer, a more talented artist or sculptor. We are all involuntarily aspiring to everything high and beautiful, but...

How often do we miss the very basis of all beauty! A singer receives his talent from God who is the best Singer, and an artist receives his talent from the Greatest of artists who, by the way, is the most reliable Friend and the most loving Father. For those who like joy, He is the Source of it. And for all lovers of a high-flown poetry, He is the Most Heartfelt of the poets, and so on.

How often we do not see the essence of everything we hold dear in this world. How often we do not notice the Author of everything that we habitually use and which we enjoy everyday.

God is Love

God is Love. This definition of the Lord has become so customary to us that we rarely think of its true deep meaning. However, this meaning is deep indeed, incomprehensibly deep.

Each of us has loved somebody. And each of us is certain that he knows what love is. Partially, this is true. Love is a kind of beautiful summit amidst the vanities of our time. And, the higher

the love that we have managed to experience in our lives is, the higher the summit we have managed to rise to.

But, is there a limit to love? Is there a limit to the height of these summits? If there is, only God who is the Height of all heights knows answer to this question. As for us, even the smallest of our heights are often covered by the clouds of our passions.

The Freedom of Choice

God has given us all freedom of will and freedom of choice in this life. It is not so difficult to understand that. Only the one who has chosen and has not lost the Lord in this endless sea of temptations and passions will not lose Him in the future. And, only such – His sons or His daughters – can the Father always trust indeed.

By all means possible and throughout our lives, God leads us to understand the necessity of following the way of love, kindness and forgiveness. He does all this exclusively for us so that we could attain joy, harmony and happiness.

But, if we do not agree with Him, if we prefer to go a different way in this life, the Father will not hinder us; He would respect our choice. Having once given us the freedom of choice, He will always keep it.

The Soul

The world is becoming more and more modern. However, our souls cannot get “more modern”. Just as it was a thousand years ago, our souls receive joy from love, kind deeds and forgiving other people. And in the same way, our souls are unhappy because of our lies, bad acts, condemnation and division. The soul cast in us by God cannot become more “modern”. It is perfect, but we just rarely listen to it.

No modern *toys* of our times can ever satisfy the needs of our souls, fill it or lead us to happiness. They may become a temporary distraction but a nutrient for our soul is completely different.

By feeling happy or unhappy, by the voice of conscience our soul always lets us know whether we are doing the right thing or not. This way, by committing good deeds time after time again, we gradually move towards happiness. Moreover, the place and the circumstances of our life do not matter as much. God created the world in such way so that a human being can be absolutely happy anywhere in it. Our soul fills us with happiness, not the circumstances.

Alternatively, by doing bad deeds and condemning other people, we may ‘suffocate’ our soul to the point that no external circumstances will ever bring it joy.

Faith

There is a good saying: ‘We are what we believe in.’ And, there is a pretty good degree of truth in it, because the set of our beliefs and principles is what we usually call ‘personality’.

It is obvious that following the changes to our beliefs, our personality itself changes. These changes may go in different directions, especially today when there are so many theories, religions and beliefs.

If a person starts believing in God, in the supremacy of love, kindness, help and beauty over all other meanings of this life, then one starts going in the only right direction that will really lead him to happiness, joy and light in this life and beyond.

If a person chooses to believe in something else, then all the changes will distance him from happiness and joy as much as he will deviate from the commandments of this world’s Creator.

Just like beacons on the right way, the Lord left us thousands of proofs that He does exist, and directed us to the right path to Him. Many volumes of books have been written about the miracles that happened to the Lord, prophets and many of His saints and righteous men, starting from the times of ancient Israel and to this day. All these facts were left for us by the Lord “on the surface”, so to say, in case we want to see them indeed.

However, if we decide to have some other interests, if some new electronic toy attracts us more than the miracles of the Lord and the path to the Kingdom of God, then it will be our own choice. Although, to be fair, the toy comes from Him as well...

The Light

At times, the world seems dark and hopeless to us. However, this is entirely not the case, far from it. The Lord still rules the world as it always was, and He is the Light. Our whole problem is that we do not look at this Light, nor seek it. For most of our time, we prefer ‘digging’ in the spots that are far from the light. We do not miss a piece of bad news on TV or in the newspapers and after we sincerely wonder, why our lives are unhappy.

However, in fact, the real world is different. There is more light in this world. Much more! Look around you: is it all dark and gloomy? We just look at all the negative side of the world, which the Lord has prepared for eight billion people in order to bring them up and then, we wonder how much it.

Why don't we begin to gather all the light and all the positive sides of this world with the same enthusiasm? Then, we will see the real proportion. However, for some reason, the negative side attracts us more. Is it not so because it is closer to us? This is a serious question that we need to think about. It is no secret that like attracts like.

If we start looking for light, we will see it. If we seek and see the good in this world, we will gradually be filled with it. The beauty of what we seek will gradually fill our soul. Similarly, the darkness and negative will eventually fill us if we will always choose to see it.

The light is, was and always will be the only and permanent reality in this world and beyond it. This is God's world and

nobody else's. The only question is: how often in this life do we strive for it and choose it?

Gratitude

Cognition of the Lord is the most interesting thing of all. Of course, our Father is unfathomable. But at least some rays of His light and love we can and we must touch. Otherwise, where else we will find light and love?

Why does the entire angelic world glorify the Lord? If we think that God wants this, then we are deeply mistaken. The One, who teaches us to reject vanity in ourselves, is completely free of it. Everyone in Heaven glorifies the Lord for a different reason.

For instance, if we meet a good person in our life who has helped us, we cannot but be grateful to him. This gratefulness lies higher above us; it comes from the heart.

What are we then to say about all those who owe everything to the Lord while staying close to Him always? – The ones, to whom He gives life, His love, His joy and much, much more. The best they have comes from God. And seeing this, they cannot help but glorify Him.

It is so with us on Earth. All the best that we have comes from God. All the best that we had or will have comes from Him as well. But often, we do not see this and do not remember Him.

Nevertheless, He gives and gives, and gives. He cannot do otherwise. He will give always and everywhere, despite everything. And, by the way, gratitude is mostly needed for us. It warms our hearts, although the Father, of course, will always smile in return...

Forgiveness

Sometimes, we do not like to forgive very much. Yet, let us learn a little from our Father.

There are several billion people already on Earth. And, hardly anyone manages not to commit a sin, willingly or not, at least once a day. Often, we manage to live a life not knowing about Him, and often we consciously turn away from Him. But, the Lord never remembers offences. For every one of His children, He fights as hard as He can from the first to the last day in order to bring them to light and goodness. He fights for each of the eight billion.

That is why, He is God and the Source of hope and happiness for everyone!

As for us, sometimes we cannot even forgive one person, and for a long time after that we sigh and wonder why we feel so unhappy.

Seeing Kindness in People

It's very important for us in this life to learn to see kindness in people. Such a vision brings great happiness to our soul, which then we can draw out anywhere people are. The Lord loves us always and everywhere, despite anything. This means that it is possible and that we must strive for it as well.

Without a doubt, a lot of bad in people can be seen. Yes, there is a lot of evil sometimes, but there is much more good! Evil is like an intrusive advertising: always loud, always on the surface, always eye-catching. An angry person, for example, can be seen a hundred meters away, whereas we might not even notice a thousand of quiet people around us. Goodness is quiet, humble, and unpretentious. Often, it is not so noticeable in a person, so only the closest people can see it well.

We must learn to look at people from the right angle. If we really wish to see the good in one or the other person, the Lord will always help us do that. For unlike us, He can see one's soul!

The World

Father gave this world to us to live here happily. Seas and mountains, forests and rivers, fishes and birds, animals and pets – all this is our common beautiful home and our closest neighbors. People must learn to coexist peacefully and continue to develop this world for their own and the common good.

The commandments that the Father left us through His Son will always show us the way to happiness and joy on Earth: love and respect for other people, help and forgiveness, repentance for all our bad deeds and actions, honesty always and everywhere.

Following these principles, people will become happier at any place on the planet, because then, God Himself will be with them. And, we know many places in this world, where people living this way, have made serious advances in this direction. These kind and peace loving countries are well-known and many people like to travel there.

Inversely, the farther people move away from the principles of hospitality and support, respect and honesty inside the countries and beyond, the more apparent the unhappiness of people living there becomes. One cannot become happy in God's world and stay far away from His principles. It is a myth that God has been dispelling year after year and century after century in different parts of the world.

Only in love and unity, mutual respect and help lies a happy future for all human beings on earth. And beyond this world, those living by these principles will not be abandoned by the Father.

Family

Family is a small world given to us by the Lord, where every soul can and must obtain happiness and love. However, it is not a secret that families have become more fragile today. Nowadays, young people believe less and less in a lasting and happy family relationship; divorce statistics confirms this. But, why are families so weak? Where do they lose their stability?

The answer is quite obvious here and again leads us to the desires and passions of our soul. We often forget about them in family life. Our souls want love, quick resolution of conflicts in the family, absolute forgiveness of our loved ones and ultimate sincerity and honesty in the relationship. But often, with our lies and insults, jealousy and stubbornness day by day, we build the wall of distrust, coldness and alienation. Although, we ourselves are no less guilty and sometimes even more guilty of many conflicts and quarrels in our family.

Is it possible to have true love in the family throughout life? Of course! But, for that, each of the consorts must want this and cherish this love, remembering that any insults and resentments inevitably leads to loss of warmth, division and coldness. Each spouse must cherish their loved one, forgive mistakes and sins, thereby restoring the initial purity of their relationship. Then, such love will not be scared of anything; neither time nor circumstances.

A strong and close-knit family where such love appears, will always be an inexhaustible source of light and joy for every day; it will be the place where it is always warm and cozy.

On Unity and Division

The Lord always wants us to be together; He always calls us to unite. Any passions in us such as deprecation, lie, anger, greed and others always lead to division. They will lead us inevitably to it, if we do not start countering them.

A lonely person is always weaker. Let us remember a well-known rule of all conquerors: “Divide and conquer”. It is so, because we are always weaker staying separately. It is the same with spiritual issues.

Our souls, purified from passions, always want to be together as they start striving involuntary for their single center – God, who is present in this world through love and friendship, honesty and sincerity, beauty and harmony, happiness and light. Therefore, we will inevitably be drawn to people in whom these qualities start opening.

Each time we escape the “stinging” of this world and other people “who do not understand us”, we, in fact, flee away from an honest and sincere look upon ourselves, at our imperfections. But, escaping will never help us find the answers that can indeed lead us to our happiness.

Happiness

Happiness is always inside us. It is our soul that makes us happy and free, if it is purified from passions and addictions of different sorts. Then the soul is open to God, and He fills it with light, joy and love.

This light penetrates all spheres of our lives and gives a warm and happy hue to everything we do and to everyone we meet. It is all as different from a grey, routine life as a color photo differs from a black-and-white one.

It certainly takes effort and sometimes, a great effort. But, do we not sometimes make a considerable effort for the sake of various trifles? After all, we are talking about our soul and future here. So, laziness is simply illogical in these matters, and we will always regret a missed opportunity.

It does not matter how old we are or how many worries and things to do we have. All of that does not matter! One can begin spiritual growth anywhere, anytime. One only needs to pay attention to oneself, to one's deeds, thoughts and wishes. One needs to become very sensitive to the voice of one's conscience - through it, the Father help us see the events as they truly are. One must become completely honest with oneself and others, realizing that any lie does not come from the Lord at all. One must do his best not to judge people, but always seek and find goodness and kindness in them.

And then, the results will inevitably appear. The Lord always gives support and strengthens those who choose the right path in

this life. He will never leave any good wish or a good thought without support.

Conscience

There is a just and incorruptible judge inside each and every one of us – our conscience. It was given to us by the Lord. It is a spiritual compass of His that helps us stay on the right path in this difficult world.

If we do something wrong, our conscience will inevitably “nag” us until we do the right thing. And, no amount of self-justification can save us from its voice. When we do the right thing, our conscience will always be silent.

However, if we do something despite our conscience, often justifying our wrong deeds, then the voice of conscience inside us will become quieter and quieter and may completely disappear. Then, after some time, even the most terrible sins may seem to us “mere weaknesses of human nature”. The Father always wants to help us and tries to tell us the right decision. However, if we decide to act contrary to his advice, He will not hinder us.

In this life, everyone may pursue the goals that are close to them; and the Lord, even after seeing our mistakes and feeling worried for us, still allows us to do as we want. Freedom of our will is the sign of His respect for His children and their choice. Yes, we will always be His children. But, will He become the beloved Father to us? This is the question that each of us must answer for ourselves - this is also our choice.

That is right, we can choose anything in this life even against the voice of our conscience. However, we must not be surprised if this “anything” lead us to place we never actually wished to come to.

Our passions

Now, let us discuss in details what keeps us from pushing through to light and joy in our lives. Nobody will deny that on the path to the Lord, we have to overcome resistance, constantly choosing between good and evil, between truth and lie, between love and resentment, and often, the right choice does not come to us easily at all!

Why is that so? What force stands against the natural wishes of our souls and leads us astray and even backwards? The answer to this question has been known for a long time. This force is the devil who is inside us, if he manages to fill us with passions and sins. It is worth noting here that any passion and sin is absolutely alien to our soul which can and must live without them. But until the Lord – helping our will and effort – frees us from them, they are still ours.

What can these passions and sins be compared to? Figuratively speaking, they could be compared to a sticky dark paint that covers our soul like a light bulb. So, the more passions we have, the less the light comes from our soul. If we let those passions fill us more and more, this light may disappear completely.

But this does not mean that our soul, a piece of God, has disappeared. No, it is impossible. We just consciously chose to live without it. After that, should we really be surprised that true love, joy and happiness can hardly be felt by us in this case?

It should be noted that this “paint” is not just very sticky, but also very cunning. Oh, it is not so easy to wash off! This path requires tenacity, time and firmness. Nevertheless, if the work is done correctly, the results will always be evident. It is impossible not to notice the growing brightness of our “light bulb” after our efforts.

Types of passions ¹

Let us take a closer look at the types of “paints” that covers our souls. This knowledge is very important as it helps us to wash it off quicker and better. Of course, only the Lord can rid us of passions, but it is us who must want this, while cleaning our soul, washing off the layers of “paint”, aiming at inner purity. Only this way, through such collaboration, can the light of our soul will become brighter day by day.

Now let's talk in more detail about the passions themselves. We shall begin with the passion of deprecation. Despite it looking harmless and even popular nowadays, it is one of the darkest “paints” that may cover our souls. It is not a coincidence that the Lord mentioned it nine times during the Sermon on the Mount,

¹ For more details on types of passions and ways to overcome them, please, see the book “Face yourself. How to overcome your passions”.

whereas other passions He only mentioned once or twice. There cannot be any randomness with the Lord.

And here is the thing: deprecation is the opposite of love. It is impossible to take offense at someone without closing your heart to them. Where resentment grows, love fades and where true love is, resentment is not. If a person does something wrong, a truly loving person will experience other feelings toward him: forgiveness, compassion, willingness to help and support. And therefore, there is always light in such a heart.

There are other passions that close our hearts from each other, such as jealousy and lies.

Any lie always separates us and deprives our hearts of love and sincerity. After a lie, the hearts can no longer beat in unison as before. The more lies appear, the further away the hearts get from each other. This wall of lies can only be broken if one sincerely confesses and the other sincerely forgives. The Lord always comes to our rescue if we repent or forgive someone. There is no other way to eliminate the consequences of lies for our hearts. Even if the mind has long forgotten about a lie, the heart still remembers it because the lie remains a burden.

Next, about jealousy. A sense of ownership is a basis for poisonous jealousy and mistrust that appear in us. However, only the threads of love and trust that keep people's hearts together. All other "threads" are weak. Just like we do not like being someone's property, the others do not like it either. These two feelings – love and a sense of ownership come from completely different sources. So all our suffering in love comes only from

losing our “property” which we create solely in our heads. A truly loving heart never suffers.

Love comes from the Lord and it lives exclusively by the laws of trust, dedication and forgiveness. Therefore, all those who wish to “tie” their loved ones firmer must simply love them truly as they are. Let us be ourselves and let others be themselves. There are so many interesting things in our differences!

There are many other passions and addictions besides the ones mentioned above, for instance: despondency, pride, vanity, greed and so on. The Lord will always prompt us and point out those passions that hinder us from being happy. We must fight against them with all our might with the Lord’s help.

It is also important to understand that by diminishing our passions, we do not diminish our own nature and personality. We remain the same – lively and ardent, but we eliminate the sin within ourselves.

Dependencies

The problem of dependencies is probably one of the most serious problems of today’s spiritual work. How much is being sold and offered around us today! And often, following our uncontrollable desires, we become “overgrown” with so many useless things and activities that are just stealing our time.

After that, we may try to look light and free, however, in some cases, we with our “freedom” look more like a moth in the center of a cobweb. By the way, mostly created by ourselves.

Dependencies always deprive us of freedom to a certain extent. The essence of dependencies is not in the things that we have; although, having too many of them, we can hardly keep the lightness. The essence of dependencies lies only in our attitude towards those things and to different ideas. Here, everything is pretty simple: for example, if we have something, but we do not depend on it, then we really own it. And we are ready to be without it. If there is no such lightness, there is the dependency, and the thing we own begins to own us.

How should we fight against dependencies? As in everything else, we should develop a calm and reasonable look upon things and more often remember about the temporality of this world and everything earthly. It is not about the things themselves, but the point is in our inner mindset towards them, to which passions like to cling. That is why, one can be absolutely free while possessing a lot, or one can be a slave of a few of useless things.

But if we get into the “cobweb” of our dependencies, what is the point of talking about spirituality here? In this case, we need to manage to pull all our “strings” in time.

Light and Despondency

All the gloomy states of our soul such as despondency, apathy, depression and others do not exist by themselves. It is just the absence of something. Like, for example, darkness is simply the absence of light. But in this case, it is the absence of soul’s light, love, happiness and joy which can only be given to us by the Lord.

Therefore, there is no point in fighting despondency and depression by methods other than seeking happiness, love and joy in this life. The constant increase in the number of depressions in the world shows the ineffectiveness of other methods created by people.

When we continuously criticize someone, when we become annoyed, when we tell a lie and become frightened by everything, when we voluntarily wrap ourselves in a great number of needless addictions, then we step further away from the ways of light, from the ways of the Lord. So why are we surprised that any light and joy then disappears and depression and despondency comes instead? It is quite obvious that in order to scramble from all these dark states of our soul, we must start moving in the opposite way – towards forgiveness, honesty, freedom from addictions, and so on. Only this way we can return light and joy to our lives.

How to overcome passions

It is not a secret that we often face serious temptations from our passions. Moreover, the waves of resentment, irritation or for example despondency, will roll over us for a long time even if we do everything right in our spiritual work.

What should we do - our old “tenants” are not simply willing to leave their warm and cozy shelter which we provided to them for many years. We will have to prove to them many times that we no longer go the same way. Certainly, with time, these waves

will become weaker, especially if we counter them in the right way.

Therefore, first of all, we should realize that if we give in to them and begin to actually resent someone or become irritated for some reason, we will only delay the process of their expulsion. The best thing we can do in such circumstances is to try to resist these waves as hard as we can.

If, for instance, our passions try to push us into deprecating someone, we must try to do the contrary and set ourselves on warm attitude towards that person, remembering something good about him or her. Of course, it is not simple to do so in such moments. However, if we succeed in it, we will learn how short-lived the defense of passions is, if the Lord helps us. Without a doubt, He will always help us, if we fight our passions sincerely and bravely.

If we cannot find powers in us to think well of someone - that can happen sometimes - we must try our best to at least not to condemn them. We must turn to the Lord for help and ask Him to shine a true light upon the situation and help us to overcome the wave of resentment and irritation. Ask necessarily.

With this seemingly simple appeal to the Lord, we call upon His light for help. And, of course, He comes to us and begins to disperse the darkness in our souls. The best reward for our perseverance and proof of the rightness of our actions is the warmth and light that we then feel instead of a wave of irritation. And very often, looking at the person we recently resented, we will think: “How good that he exists!”

What sin is

Our sins are the “creation” of our passions. Any passion wants to somehow manifest in us and for that, it pushes us towards certain actions, words and thoughts. If it succeeds, a sin appears in our hearts, and the more times we give in to passions, the more sins we collect in our lives.

What does it look like and what can it be compared to? We all know about different examples of overweight people. It is not a secret that by gaining weight, people lose their attractiveness, lightness and often their health. Furthermore, the more weight is gained, the greater these consequences become.

It is the same with sins; they are the extra weight for our souls, taking away its lightness, joy, light and love. As with the overweightness of human bodies, the more the “weight” of sins lies in our souls, the heavier it becomes for our souls.

Of course, we can somehow adapt to living with this ‘weight’, as some overweight people do. However, look how happy they are when they manage to lose a few kilograms! Needless to say, how happy our soul will become when it manages to be purified from old sins.

The Lord gave us a very simple and efficient way of cleaning our souls – to repent sincerely from the sins we have committed. Deeply and very sincerely. Without sincerity in repentance, we will only add new, sly sins of lie to the old ones.

Repentance can be different. Sometimes, we must apologize to the person and other times, asking forgiveness from the Lord

is enough. In some cases, we must correct something or do something else. The Lord will always point us to the right decision in a given situation through our conscience.

It is very good if we wish to confess in a church. The more we despise a sin and the more reliably we want to get rid of it, the better it is.

There is no other way to get rid of sins. Even if we embark on a spiritual path and begin to fight our passions, our old sins will still prevent us from getting through to true light and joy. Is it easy to learn to dance beautifully with weights around one's neck?

Let's look at another example. Let's assume we have decided to take care of the cleanness of our flat from today and start to ensure closely that we do not bring rubbish inside. That is good, but what about the garbage that we used to bring into our flat for a long time? Because with old rubbish, our flat will not be clean anyway. It is the same with our soul - we have to get all the old rubbish out of it. God has long ago placed "garbage cans" in our flat with the inscription "Repentance" on it. We only need to pick up our old sins from the floor and put them in the garbage can with the repentance.

The Fruits

Usually, any of our activities yield fruits. For instance, salary is the fruit of our work and knowledge is the fruit of our studying. Our spiritual work must yield results as well. The Lord spoke a lot about this two thousand years ago.

Spiritual fruits are all the good qualities of our soul that are revealed when the Lord banishes our passions. They include love, not only for the nearest and dearest, but for many other people; they include light and joy that begin to dwell within us; they include a constantly peaceful mindset, independent of all circumstances; they include living with warm faith and love towards the Lord, who helped us to attain all this.

These fruits do not grow very fast. Nobody finishes school in a week or grows a tree in a month. Spiritual work also requires time, patience, perseverance; moreover, this work is the hardest of all. But, the fruits will come, they will definitely come, if we do our work day after day with faith and patience.

We can reach Heavenly joy already here on Earth. True Heaven, which is always with us, and which was given to us by the Lord - it is our heart free from passions, when love and light live in it.

The Joyful Way to the Lord

The way to the Lord is the most joyful of all because it leads to the Height of all joy and light.

Let us remember ourselves in the moments, when we go to visit someone or to some place where we feel very good. Does not the very thought of future joy fill us with happiness long before the event begins?

So, how can we not be happy when we go to the best of place where the Host is waiting for us - His children - with the utmost love and warmth?

Often, we do not feel happy on this path, because we spend very little time understanding it all. The discovery of the most positive and joyful qualities of the Father, the vision of His help and love towards us at every moment turns our grey and often joyless existence into a beautiful fairytale.

Which, by the way, never ends...

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