

# Loving God

*Palma Neal*

**PURPOSE:** This program is written to help us understand that loving God must be our number one priority. As a result of loving God first, we are then led to loving others as an outcome of that love.

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 10:27; Deuteronomy 6:5; 1 John 4:19; Ephesians 2:8-9; Psalm 34:22; Psalm 136:23-24; Luke 4:8; Psalm 42:1; Luke 10:39; Psalm 40:8

**PREPARATION:** Ask ahead of time for each expected participant to bring her purse, or another important item, with her. Have paper and pencils available, and Bible references should be written on slips of paper and distributed for participants to read at given times.

**Music:** If using music, acquire enough hymnals for each person to have one. Optional: Have a recording or an instrumentalist play accompaniment.

**Scripture:** Have Bibles available for those who need one, and assign Scripture pieces at the start, to make reading through them smoother.

## Hook

The following activity is suggested as an ice-breaker or introduction to the lesson. Ask everyone in attendance to look in their purses and find the item that is the most important thing inside. Go around and let each person “show and tell” about the item and why it is important to her. Encourage each one to tell why she chose the item and how her life would be different without it. You may give some limitations (such as, no credit cards, money, house keys). You may even announce prior to the meeting to bring an item from home that is of great importance to share.

## Book

Read the theme verse – (NIV for all Scriptures) Luke 10:27 and Deuteronomy 6:5

As we saw in the opening activity, we all have things we cherish and think are impossible to live without. We could say we “love” these things. Luke 10:27 explains the extent of how we are admonished to love God, “...with ALL your heart, ALL your soul, ALL your strength, ALL your mind.” That seems to say to me, “Love with your whole being!”

**ASK:** Why do we love God?

**READ:** 1 John 4:19

We love him because he loved us first. Even in our sin, he loved us. Even when we were unlovable, he loved us. Even when we could not save ourselves, he loved us and died for us.

Other reasons that may be shared and discussed if participants do not share their own reasons.

He redeemed us.

**READ:** Ephesians 2:8-9

He reconciled us.

**READ:** Psalm 34:22

He rescued us.

**READ:** Psalm 136:23-24

**ASK:** How do we love God?

Ways we love God that can be shared and discussed if others do not share.

We worship him.

**READ:** Luke 4:8

We want him.

**READ:** Psalm 42:1; Luke 10:39

We walk with him.

**READ:** Psalm 40:8

## **Look**

On a piece of paper, have participants complete the statement: I love God because....

I love God because of the times he surrounded me with his strong arms and gave me strength beyond my own. During my childhood and teen years, I lived with inward feelings of inferiority. I pushed to overcome but learned that it was only through the strength I received from praying that I could rise above the negative thoughts. Whether I was in school, at church or when singing or playing the piano, prayer became a regular habit. God always strengthened me to accomplish the task. The best? The greatest? No, but enough and beyond what I needed.

It was through these times of prayer that I learned to love him more. Time spent in conversation and waiting for his answer, assurance from previous experiences when he always gave extra strength and promises that he would always be with me are examples of times that knowing him caused me to love him even more. And now in my later adult years, the assurance and promises are even more precious as I have entered a new phase of my life.

Ask if others would like to share what they wrote.

Bill and Gloria Gaither wrote a song several years ago that says in the chorus, “Loving God, loving each other; And the story never ends.” Our story begins with loving God and it continues with loving others as our theme verse indicates. Loving God is a continual process and is revealed through our love for others. One does not stop and the other begins. They run concurrently.

In our closing prayer, I ask you to commit to using the ways and reasons we have discussed today in order to show God your love for him.

**PRAYER:** Pray prayers of commitment by any who choose.

**Shared by:** Palma Neal, Lenoir, N.C., attended Berkshire Christian College and graduated from Fayetteville State University with a degree in elementary education. She taught 25 years before retiring in 2013, after which she continued as a substitute teacher until 2020. She and her late husband, Ed, served in ministry for nearly 52 years. She is the mother of two sons and Nana to three grandchildren.