

Loving God: *The Primary Principle of the Christian Life* is the first installment of a new curriculum offering you an exciting opportunity to challenge your Sunday School or small group ministry to greater spiritual growth. This curriculum is designed to provide solidly biblical, spiritually-stretching lessons that minister to both the teacher and the students. For the teacher, a variety of tools have been provided to help improve your grasp of the material and to aid you in presenting it effectively to the student. For the students, a handout has been designed for every lesson which will draw them into the text of Scripture and encourage them to think through its relevance to their lives. Other volumes in this series on principles of the Christian life will include: Loving God, Glorifying God, and Holiness; Loving God while Living in the World, and Loving God and Others.

Philip Brown has responded to the need for good holiness literature with the pen of a scholar and the heart of a devout Christian. The result is the *Loving God* series. It is biblically sound and spiritually challenging. It will be a welcomed resource for Sunday School teachers, small group leaders, pastors, or anyone interested in the vital subject of loving God.

—Dr. Michael Avery, President
God's Bible School and College

The primary principles of the Christian life have possibly never been presented more clearly or in a more teachable manner. *Loving God*, if thoroughly studied and presented, will surely lift Sunday School out of the doldrums. I am certain this writing will demand a sequel.

—Dr. James B. Keaton, Sr.,
General Chairman
Bible Methodist Connection of Churches

As a solid, biblically-based resource for our Sunday School classes and other study groups, I heartily welcome Philip Brown's excellent teaching material. The lessons are uniquely designed to stimulate thinking, encourage discussion and create life-changing applications. In the choice of subjects, the theme, *Loving God* makes this curriculum a must. I will use this material for my own personal study.

—Rev. Paul Pierpoint, Senior Pastor
Hobe Sound Bible Church

Philip Brown has given us a full-orbed study resource that is instructive and inspirational. This material will prove to be an exceptional curriculum for Sunday School classes, small groups, and Bible studies. The pastor and teacher and learner will all find great profit in accessing these studies.

—Leonard Sankey, General Secretary
Interchurch Holiness Convention



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Loving God: The Primary Principle of the Christian Life

A. PHILIP BROWN II

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Contents

Introduction	ii
Lesson 1: Loving God Totally	1
Lesson 2: A Self-Sacrificial Commitment	9
Lesson 3: Delighting Ourselves in the Lord	15
Lesson 4: Delighting in What Delights God – I	27
Lesson 5: Delighting in What Delights God – II	35
Lesson 6: Rejoicing in Serving Him – I	41
Lesson 7: Rejoicing in Serving Him – II	47
Lesson 8: Desiring to Please Him in Everything – I	53
Lesson 9: Desiring to Please Him in Everything – II	61
Lesson 10: Seeking Our Happiness in Him	69
Lesson 11: Finding Our Happiness in Him	75
Lesson 12: Thirsting For More	83
Student Study Guides	93

Introduction

To the Teacher

Welcome to *Loving God: The Primary Principle of the Christian Life*! This is the first installment of a new curriculum offering you an exciting opportunity to challenge your Sunday School or small group ministry to greater spiritual growth. This curriculum is designed to provide solidly biblical, spiritually-stretching lessons that minister to both the teacher and the students. For the teacher, a variety of tools have been provided to help improve your grasp of the material and to aid you in presenting it effectively to the student. For the students, a handout has been designed for every lesson which will draw them into the text of Scripture and encourage them to think through its relevance to their lives.

Loving God: The Primary Principle of the Christian Life is intended to be the first in a series of lessons dealing with the primary principles of the Christian life. Other installments in this series on principles of the Christian life will include lessons on Loving God, Glorifying God, and Holiness; Loving God while Living in the World, and Loving God and Others.

Jesus Himself declared that there is no greater command than that we love God. Most Christians know what the greatest command is, but few understand *how* to love God or how loving God relates to every area of our lives. The following lessons walk through each of the major elements what it means to love God totally and provide practical suggestions for applying this crucial truth to life.

Curriculum Goals

Two goals energized the creation of this curriculum. Much of the Sunday School literature available today is designed for a lecture-style class in which the teacher lectures to the students. With a few outstanding exceptions, this style of Sunday School teaching fosters a passive atmosphere where students sit more or less numbly through their umpteenth Sunday School lesson without ever engaging their minds to learn or apply the Scriptures.

Studies of how adults learn have shown repeatedly they gain and retain the most value from instruction that invites them to engage their minds in the learning process. When a student, guided by a well-prepared instructor, discovers what the Scriptures teach for themselves their excitement and interest increases tremendously. To facilitate active learning on the part of adult Sunday School students, this curriculum provides a set of student handouts for each lesson that are tightly integrated with the teacher's guide.

The student handouts are not fill-in-the-blanks that can only be answered only if one has a copy of the teacher's guide. Instead, the handouts engage the students' minds with two types of questions. The first are content-oriented questions whose answers are derived directly from the text of Scripture. The second are application-oriented questions that challenge the student to make specific, concrete application of the truths they are learning to their lives.

The second goal behind the creation of this curriculum was to address the need for solid biblical lessons that move through a topic slowly enough to permit the students to gain more than a surface understanding of what the Scriptures say on the topic. Most of us have either listened to or taught a lesson on the Great Commandment. In contrast to a single lesson on this subject, this entire quarter's worth of lessons has been devoted to exploring this vital truth.

The author of Hebrews rebuked the recipients of his letter for still requiring milk when they ought to have matured spiritually to the point of being teachers (Heb. 5:12-6:3). If we are going to heed Scripture's admonition to help our congregations mature beyond the milk stage, they must be provided with spiritual meat. This curriculum seeks to fill that need by providing believers with solid spiritual food that will enable them to grow into maturity in their faith and knowledge of their Savior, Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:12-16).

Materials Provided

Each unit in this curriculum comes with a teacher's manual and lesson handouts. The following sections explain how to use each of the components of this curriculum. You will gain the most benefit from this material, if you take a few minutes to read through these explanations.

Teacher's Lesson Manual

Scripture, Objectives, and Lesson Outline

The first page of each lesson contains the key Scripture passages that are used in the lesson, the knowledge and response objectives for the lesson, as well as the lesson outline. The knowledge and response objectives identify for the teacher what the student should know by the end of the lesson and how they should be challenged to respond to the lesson's truths. The lesson outline is included to give you a quick overview of the lesson's contents.

The Lesson

The lessons have been written in a somewhat conversational style. They are not, however, designed to be read word for word. Instead the teacher should read through the lesson, underlining or highlighting key elements, and then use his own words to teach the lesson. Some teachers have found that teaching from the student handout helps drive the lesson and maintain lesson continuity. Others simply teach from the teacher's guide and

use the student questions integrated into the guide to prompt them to ask the students questions. You are encouraged to use the materials in whatever manner best fits you and the needs of your class.

Teacher Note Textboxes

Occasionally helpful notes for the teacher have been placed throughout the lesson text. These notes will always appear in a shaded box. These are designed to give you additional information about something in the lesson that may or may not be relevant to the student.

Discussion and Application Questions

There are two kinds of questions on the student handouts: content-oriented questions for discussion, and application-oriented questions. In order to help the teacher integrate the student handout with the teacher's lesson, the questions that appear on the student handouts have been inserted into each of the lessons in the location within the lesson where that question should be asked. In addition to headings which indicate whether a question is a discussion question or an application question, symbols have been used that mark different kinds of questions. If the question is discussion-oriented, the ☞ symbol precedes the question. If the question is application-oriented, the ⚡ symbol precedes the question.

Footnotes

Footnotes have generally been avoided. However, if it was necessary to cite the source from which a quotation was taken, a footnote has been added. At times additional information that is helpful for teachers, but was too long to place in a Teacher Note box, was placed in a footnote.

The Student Handout

Purpose of the Student Handouts

The student handouts are designed to do several things: (1) to provide structure and direction for each lesson; (2) to help maintain the students' attention; (3) to focus the students on what the Bible says and engage their mind in thinking about the text; (4) to give the students an opportunity to think about how what the Bible says relates to them and how to integrate the truth into their life; (5) to challenge the students to grow in grace.

In order to accomplish these goals, the study guide handouts are designed around the lesson outline. Each handout includes three elements: (a) objective, content questions, (b) subjective, application questions, and often (c) a closing challenge.

The student can easily find the answer to the content question by reading the verse associated with the question. Yes or No questions and fill-in-the-blank outlines have been

avoided since these do not encourage the student to think actively about the lesson truth. On a few occasions there will be blanks on student handouts for which the teacher will need to supply the information. The application questions are designed for the student to think about how the material applies to his life. The closing challenge, when included, will be the last item on the handouts and should challenge to the student to further thought about or application of the lesson's truth.

Symbols in the Student Handout

The same symbols that are included in the teacher's lesson have been used in the student handout. ♪ marks content-oriented discussion questions. The student should be able to find the answer by looking up the indicated Scripture passage or by thinking about the question itself. ♫ marks application-oriented questions. These questions ask the students to think about how to apply the truth they are learning to their lives. A simple bullet • marks questions or fill-in-the-blanks that the teacher must supply.

Most of the student handouts fit on one page. Lesson three, however, has a two page handout. It is designed to be copied onto one sheet of paper, front and back. If copied correctly it will form a booklet.

Preparing to Teach

There are three kinds of teachers: (1) Those who have not mastered their material. They are poor teachers. (2) Those who have mastered their material. They are good teachers. (3) Those who have been mastered by their material. They are the best teachers.

If you are not endeavoring to live the truth you are teaching, it will have little of life or vibrancy. But if you have applied the truth to your own life, your students should be able to sense the personal reality of what you are teaching.

In order to help you prepare for the lesson, application questions have been included within the lesson itself. This gives you, the teacher, an opportunity to apply the truths you are learning to your own life. I would strongly encourage you to take time to think through your answers carefully. The deeper your thoughts on the subject, the deeper you will be able to take your students.

May the Lord bless you as you grow in your understanding of what it means to love Him with all your heart, soul, and strength!

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