

Give Thanks to the Lord

Meditation #1: Give Thanks to the Lord for His Superiority

“My Dad can beat up your Dad!” Do you remember those grade school kind of arguments? Did you boast about how strong or tough your dad was compared to others? Was your Dad up on a pedestal of strength for you?

There are many “gods” in this world. Some people have gone so far as to create a god for every thing that they can observe: there is a god of the sun, the god of the grass, the god of the water, the god of the forest, god of the mountain, and the list goes on and on. Then there are other gods of other religions. Maybe someone ascribes to Allah as god, the one true and only god. Most Hindus worship one being of ultimate oneness called Brahman who then is manifested in many other gods and goddesses. Some say that everything is god: the sun is god, the grass is god, water is god, ultimately, I am god.

Well, I’m going to say it, “My God can beat up your gods.” The idea of one God who is also three persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is unique to Christianity. The fact also that this Triune God is the one who made all things and is in control of all things is also unique to Christianity. The Bible tells us that God is all-powerful, that he knows all things, that he is present everywhere at all times. You cannot escape him. You cannot beat him. He is the God of gods and Lord of Lords. He is the ultimate. There is no one higher than him. He is God. And as God, he is good.

A reading from Psalm 136, verses 1-3: **Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the God of gods. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords: His love endures forever.**

M: Give thanks to the Lord for being the God of gods, and the Lord of lords!

C: **Alleluia! Thank you, Lord, for being the one true God, the God over everyone and everything!**

Meditation #2: Give Thanks to the Lord for His Creating Love

About two months ago, a lunar eclipse caused a blood moon. My wife scrambled to get the camera and take pictures as it happened. We had people come to our parking lot here at church to get a good view of it. I saw numerous cars pulled off to the side of the road to witness the event. Did you get a chance to see it?

Even if you didn’t get to see the blood moon, how many times have you sat out and stared at the stars? How many times have you wonder about how the stars got there, what they do? Stars have served as markers for direction for travelers. They govern our concept of time, what a day is, sunrise to sunset. Their position helps us mark seasons. These big balls of gas benefit us more than just looking pretty.

God created the great lights – the sun and the stars – for our benefit. He has used them for even greater things. God pointed to the stars for Abraham telling him that his descendants would be more numerous than the ones that he could see. A star led the wise men to Judea to find a king, to Bethlehem where they found Jesus with Mary and Joseph. These stars that God made will continue to burn until that day when they stop, when the world comes to an end.

Until that day, though, we get to observe those stars. We get to marvel at God’s great creation. We enjoy their benefits and know that God made each of them uniquely and set them purposefully in the heavens for us. He controls them to point us to his great and enduring love for us.

A reading from Psalm 136 verses 4-9: **to him who alone does great wonders, His love endures forever. who by his understanding made the heavens, His love endures forever. who spread out the earth upon the waters, His love endures forever. who made the great lights— His love endures forever. the sun to govern the day, His love endures forever. the moon and stars to govern the night; His love endures forever.**

M: Give thanks to the Lord for the great wonders of creation!

C: **Lord, I thank you for making this wonderful world for me to enjoy!**

Meditation #3: Give Thanks to the Lord for His Redeeming Love

Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32) The Jews of his day answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?” (John 8:33)

If you know your Bible history, you know that these Jews were flat wrong. The Jewish people had been slaves. Actually, they had been slaves for over 400 years in Egypt. There were other times in their history where they had to pay tribute to non-Jewish kings. Even in Jesus’ day, the Jews were part of the Roman Empire, answering to Caesar. They were not their own. They were not as free as they considered themselves to be.

Yet there is a redeemer. There is one who bought them back out of their slavery. When buying them out of the slavery from Egypt, God did it with a show of force. He struck down the firstborn of Egypt in order to release his people from their grasp. He parted the Red Sea and his people passed between the waters that were stacked up on either side of them as they walked on dry ground. Whatever king held his people captive, God gave the Jews victory over them. God buys his people back from slavery, from the control of others.

This truth culminates in the life of Jesus. God buys people back not just from slavery to earthly rulers. He buys them back from the slavery of sin. He changes us from being slaves to being members of his family. He set us free with his own blood, by his great power. We belong to God and no one else because he has redeemed us.

A reading from Psalm 136 verses 10-22: **to him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt His love endures forever. and brought Israel out from among them His love endures forever. with a mighty hand and outstretched arm; His love endures forever. to him who divided the Red Sea asunder His love endures forever. and brought Israel through the midst of it, His love endures forever. but swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea; His love endures forever. to him who led his people through the wilderness; His love endures forever. to him who struck down great kings, His love endures forever. and killed mighty kings— His love endures forever. Sihon king of the Amorites His love endures forever. and Og king of Bashan— His love endures forever. and gave their land as an inheritance, His love endures forever. an inheritance to his servant Israel. His love endures forever.**

M: Give thanks to the Lord for redeeming his people!

C: **Lord, thank you for keeping your promises to your people and buying us back from the slavery of this world!**

Meditation #4: Give Thanks to the Lord for His Continuing Love

Some look at this world and all that is created in it and liken God to a watchmaker. God set it all up, carefully placing every piece where it needs to go, wound the clock and is now just sitting back until it stops ticking. Maybe there is maintenance here and there, but for the most part God kicks back and is uninvolved.

God is hands on when it comes to us. We could plant all the crops we want, but none of it would grow unless God made it grow. We could attempt to take care of cattle full time, but none of them would survive if God did not produce the food for them to eat.

Why does God do this for us? It’s not because we earned or deserved. It’s not because he liked our work ethic. He does it because his love endures forever. He chooses to love us, to take care of us. It’s his choice. He chooses to give us all our earthly blessings, including our food.

And he provides even more than that. He provides what is most important to us. He frees us from our enemies. He frees us from our slavery to sin, our slavery to the devil, and our slavery to eternal death. Give thanks to the Lord for his choice to love us endures forever!

A reading from Psalm 136 verses 23-26: **He remembered us in our low estate His love endures forever. and freed us from our enemies. His love endures forever. He gives food to every creature. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the God of heaven. His love endures forever.**

M: Give thanks to the Lord for remembering us in our low estate!

C: **Lord, thank you for not only continually giving us our food and all our physical blessings, but thank you most of all for freeing us from our enemies because your love endures forever!**