



# THE UPPER ROOM

September–December 2024

WHERE THE WORLD  
MEETS TO PRAY



Daily Bible meditations  
from Christians around the world

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# THE UPPER ROOM

**WHERE THE WORLD MEETS TO PRAY**

**Daniele Och**

UK editor

INVITATIONAL  
INTERDENOMINATIONAL  
INTERNATIONAL

34 LANGUAGES

Multiple formats are available in some languages



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# How to use *The Upper Room*

*The Upper Room* is ideal in helping us spend a quiet time with God each day. Each daily entry is based on a passage of scripture and is followed by a meditation and prayer. Each person who contributes a meditation seeks to relate their experience of God in a way that will help those who use *The Upper Room* every day.

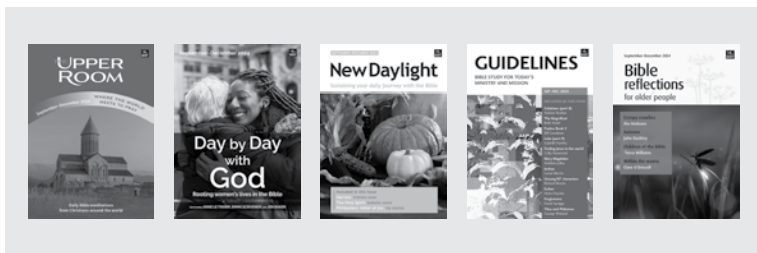
Here are some guidelines to help you make best use of *The Upper Room*:

- 1 Read the passage of scripture. It is a good idea to read it more than once, in order to have a fuller understanding of what it is about and what you can learn from it.
- 2 Read the meditation. How does it relate to your own experience? Can you identify with what the writer has outlined from their own experience or understanding?
- 3 Pray the written prayer. Think about how you can use it to relate to people you know or situations that need your prayers today.
- 4 Think about the contributor who has written the meditation. Some users of *The Upper Room* include this person in their prayers for the day.
- 5 Meditate on the 'Thought for the day' and the 'Prayer focus', perhaps using them again as the focus for prayer or direction for action.

Why is it important to have a daily quiet time? Many people will agree that it is the best way of keeping in touch every day with the God who sustains us and who sends us out to do his will and show his love to the people we encounter each day. Meeting with God in this way reassures us of his presence with us, helps us to discern his will for us and makes us part of his worldwide family of Christian people through our prayers.

I hope that you will be encouraged as you use *The Upper Room* regularly as part of your daily devotions, and that God will richly bless you as you read his word and seek to learn more about him.

## Helping to pay it forward



As part of our Living Faith ministry, we're raising funds to give away copies of Bible reading notes and other resources to those who aren't able to access them any other way, working with food banks and chaplaincy services, in prisons, hospitals and care homes.

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for all your support

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# Ravens and manna

*What does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?*

Micah 6:8 (NRSV)

When I was young and feeling sorry for myself – maybe I had been left out of a group, made a bad grade on a test or felt someone had treated me unfairly – my mother would listen to my woes and then she would say, ‘When you’re feeling sorry for yourself, the best thing is to do something kind for someone else.’ Though I would grumble about it, she was always right. That advice has stayed with me, and it has influenced the way I live my life and understand my calling as a follower of Christ.

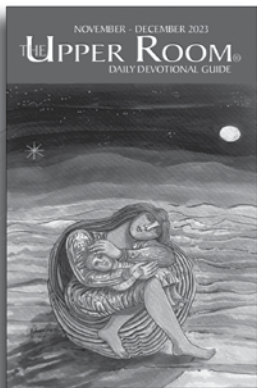
In this issue, many writers describe challenging situations when hope was hard to hold on to and it was easy to despair. Despite the uncertainty caused by chronic illness, the loss of a job, financial insecurity or grief, these writers held on to hope and found strength through prayer, Bible study and often by showing acts of compassion to others. They remind us that as people of faith, we can be the hands and feet of Christ or the answer to someone’s prayer – the manna in the wilderness (see Exodus 16), the ravens who bring food (see 1 Kings 17:1–6).

Showing compassion and care when we are at our most vulnerable requires effort and courage. But when we do, we remind others of God’s faithfulness in all seasons, and we also remind ourselves that God will remain faithful to us. May we all find the strength to remember God’s faithfulness, to trust the hope that it offers us, and to share that hope with the world through our actions.

*Lindsay L. Gray*  
*Editorial director*

## Where the world meets to pray

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Australia-English  
edition

### **Writers featured in this issue of *The Upper Room*:**

- Bill Gosling (Australia) • Margaret Martin (Australia)
- Marion Palmer (Australia)

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# The editor writes...

*'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.'*

Matthew 18:3 (NIV)

In one way, the start of September illustrates the way in which adults and children can see things very differently. For many in the grown-up world, myself included, regimented by the calendar and the northern seasons, September marks the turn towards the ending of another year. But for children and young people, September represents a significant beginning as they face the start of a new school year.

Granted, it's not a great illustration (what about adults in the education system?), nevertheless it occurred to me because, as I read this issue of *The Upper Room*, I noticed that at least a dozen meditations pointed to the same theme – the different perspective on God that children and childhood provide. Some writers relate an experience from their own childhood; others reflect on the wisdom they have learned from a child or young person in their life. In their varying ways, and inspired by different parts of scripture, they point us to one of the more underappreciated and unsettling 'Truly I tell you' statements that Jesus makes: 'Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 18:3).

There are, of course, many other themes explored in the meditations in this issue, as with every issue of *The Upper Room*. Regardless of which of those God uses to speak to us, may we, like the child Samuel, have ears to hear and hearts to respond to the Lord's voice (see 1 Samuel 3:1–10).

*Daniele Och*  
UK editor

*Among the contributions that explore the theme of childhood is the winner of our recent writing competition, Georgie Tennant (see 7 September). Congratulations to Georgie for the winning entry and also to the runners-up, April McIntyre and Christine Woolgar, whose meditations are also published in this issue (see 10 October and 1 November).*



# Courage and strength

## Read Isaiah 41:8–16

*I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, 'Do not fear, I will help you.'*

Isaiah 41:13 (NRSV)

When I was 70 years old, my doctor told me that I had a hernia and would have to undergo an operation. Prior to that I had not experienced any health issues. When I was told that I would need an operation, I was very frightened. But my doctor told me there was no alternative.

On the day of the operation, my fear caused my blood pressure to increase. They could not operate until my blood pressure came down, so another patient was taken in for surgery before me. My family members waited and prayed for me. I prayed as well.

Soon I experienced God's presence and felt that God was reminding me that because Jesus suffered and died, he understood my fear. At that time my fear vanished, and my blood pressure was back to normal when they checked it. My operation was successful. Praise be to God.

When we face difficult situations, we can remember that our great God is always with us and will provide us with courage and support. Praying to our living God, we find new hope and strength.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, thank you for giving us courage during difficult situations. Please provide courage to all those in need. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** God can help me through any challenge.

---

*Daniel Samuel Christian (Gujarat, India)*

# Revival

## Read Psalm 19:7–11

*The Lord's Instruction is perfect, reviving one's very being.*

Psalm 19:7 (CEB)

While away on a short trip, I left a potted plant outdoors in the direct heat in an unshaded area. It was a mistake. I returned home to find the plant's once-green leaves now brown and scorched, its soil hard and dry, and its appearance limp and lifeless. Over the following days, I was determined to nurse the plant back to health with water, fresh soil and plenty of shade. To my delight, the plant eventually sprouted a small, green leaf. As more green leaves appeared, the plant experienced a true revival.

Psalm 19 speaks of another revival – one that takes place in our innermost being. What water and fresh soil are to dry, lifeless plants, the word of the Lord is to the human soul, especially in times of weariness and despair. The psalmist affirms God's word as the source of the soul's revival – the means by which God nourishes it back to a state of health and vitality.

Circumstances can beat down on us like the intense heat on a summer day, and yet in our weariness, we are not left alone. The Lord, our master gardener, nurses our weary souls to health, bringing new life through the words revealed in scripture. God's word offers comfort, peace, hope, assurance, joy, strength – whatever is needed – so that we not only survive life's challenges but also thrive as God's beloved creation.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, thank you for the precious gift of your word. As we meditate on it daily, bring life and vitality to us. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** The word of the Lord revives my soul.

---

*Donyale Fraylon (Texas, USA)*

# Maintaining peace

## Read Romans 12:9–21

*If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*

Romans 12:18 (NRSV)

Every Saturday I go out for dinner with my family. One family member always wants Chinese food, but I enjoy trying different cuisines. It is challenging to pick a restaurant we all enjoy. Instead of arguing, I always suggest we eat at restaurants that serve a variety of foods. This way we can enjoy our time together rather than wasting time arguing.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul stated how important it is for us to maintain good relationships with others, however hard it might be. With God's peace in our hearts, we can find ways to prevent quarrels that only cause enmity. When we open our hearts to the Lord, the Spirit can help us create peace in every disagreement so that small matters don't develop into big matters.

We will still experience conflict, but God's wisdom can help us know how to react. With the help of the Spirit, we can find solutions to our troubles so that we can remain at peace in our relationships and enjoy the beauty of God's love all the time.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, inspire us with your wisdom and peace so that even in difficult moments, we can find serenity and joy in you. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** When I dwell in God's peace, my relationships improve.

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*Kumalawaty Sundari (Jakarta, Indonesia)*

# Designed for community

## Read Genesis 2:15–22

*Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)

When I was in college, I participated in a volunteer programme in Thailand with a group of 20 other students in which we helped teach English to children in local day-care centres and schools. One weekend our group hiked through a beautiful jungle. At one point we needed to cross a turbulent, four-foot-deep river.

Many of us were hesitant, and when someone in the group attempted to cross, he quickly lost his footing. It was clear that the current was far too strong for us to manoeuvre on our own, so we all linked arms and crossed the river together. When one of us lost our footing, the two people on either side helped them back on their feet. Without one another, we wouldn't have made it across.

While I haven't literally had to hold on to others like this in many years, I have faced challenges since then that I couldn't have endured alone. God didn't design us to go through life on our own; we need others. Jesus himself demonstrated the importance of community through maintaining a close group of disciples. We need God first and foremost, but we need others too – to lean on and allow them to help lift us up.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, help us to lean on you as we not only lift others up but allow them to lift us up too. Thank you for designing us for community. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** I can rely on God and others to help me through turbulent times.

*Emily Marszalek (Idaho, USA)*

# The dust of God's feet

## Read Psalm 8:1–9

*The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.*

Nahum 1:3 (KJV)

I was watching the clouds with my grandfather one day, looking for shapes in them. My grandfather asked me, 'Do you know what clouds are?' I thought: *Clouds form when water evaporates*. But before I answered, my grandfather said, 'Clouds are the dust of God's feet', and he explained that this was in the Bible. This gave me a sense of wonder. If the clouds were the dust of God's feet, then it was as if God had passed through wherever I saw a cloud!

I thought about this repeatedly throughout the week. I even found the Bible verse my grandfather referenced. Then on a day filled with anguish and frustration, I went out to the porch of my house, looking for clouds. I felt restored as I watched gigantic clouds pass over my head. That cloudy day no longer seemed so bad – in fact, it felt freeing. 'God has already been here', I repeated to myself as I watched the sky until my neck hurt. The wind carried the clouds away in time, and my anguish went with them. I went back inside feeling grateful and inspired.

**Prayer:** *Lord God, guide us out of trouble, and help us to see signs of your presence. Thank you for all you do for your servants and for inspiring us in every way. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** Where will I look for signs of God's presence today?

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*Maria Clara Madeira D. Paula Ribeiro (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)*

# The big picture

## Read Isaiah 55:6–11

*So is my word that comes from my mouth; it does not return to me empty. Instead, it does what I want, and accomplishes what I intend.*

Isaiah 55:11 (CEB)

I was attending the Saturday men's breakfast at the church. The featured speaker was a man who did chalk drawings as he gave a motivational talk. He began with a large, black bedsheet stapled to a wooden frame.

As he worked and talked, it was difficult to see what the drawing was going to be. He seemed to jump from one feature to another without any sort of plan. He would make chalk marks and then smear them and blend them with marks he had previously made. Sometimes he would simply cross out features he had already created.

It occurred to me that God often works in a similar way. God calls each Christ-follower to accomplish different parts of the divine purpose. It may be impossible for us to see where God is headed, how our part is related or even if God is really making any progress!

But just like the artist on that Saturday morning, God knows the ultimate picture and how each of us fits in. We, however, don't need to know God's final work; we will see it fully when we are with our creator in eternity.

**Prayer:** *Dear Father, help us accomplish the tasks which you have created for us. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** I don't have to see the full picture to follow God faithfully.

---

*Jim Fleming (Indiana, USA)*

# Coming like children

## Read Mark 10:13–16

*'Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.'*

Mark 10:15 (NIV)

If you search the internet for the scripture in today's reading, you can find many artists' impressions of the scene, depicting Jesus surrounded by angelic children, dressed in white, sitting still and smiling.

I must admit, my experiences of my own children when they were small were rarely like that! I have a photo of my son, aged 2, screaming on my front doorstep because he didn't want to stay outside but also refused to come in. It was one of the many impossible toddler-conundrums I faced as he grew.

The artists' depictions of Jesus welcoming children make us imagine them as cute, snuggly and quiet. They're not! They're loud and messy. They cry when things aren't right. But they're also authentic, real, not fake or disingenuous. We learn these things as adults to hide our struggles.

So, when Jesus invites us to come to him like children, it's okay to come as children really are – in all our messy, human complexity. We might need to come to him as a crying, roaring, snotty, stomping child if we need to, not a cute, cuddly, socially acceptable one. We might need to throw ourselves into his arms, laying pride and image aside. We might need to allow him to hold, comfort and heal us and replace our anxious thoughts with his and make us whole.

**Prayer:** *Lord, help us to come to you like a child today. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** I will bring my whole self to God like a child today, however messy that may be.

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*Georgie Tennant (England, United Kingdom)*

# New life

## Read Luke 19:1-10

*If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!*

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

Yesterday was a beautiful, sunny spring day, and I took the opportunity to ride my bike around a lake. One of my favourite parts of such rides is looking at the trees, plants and lovely views. This time I particularly noticed all the new spring leaves and the blossoms on the trees. As I marvelled at this abundant new life, my mind turned to the new life offered to us by our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Zacchaeus experienced this new life in a dramatic way after climbing a tree to see Jesus and having Jesus invite himself to his home. Zacchaeus' experience with Jesus changed his life, leading him to repay his debts to the people he had cheated in the past.

If we follow Jesus' teachings and get to know him as a personal friend and Saviour we, too, can find ourselves transformed and able to live in a new way. Through reading the Bible, prayer and joining in fellowship with other Christians, we also can be equipped to serve God in new ways and to make a difference in our world.

**Prayer:** *Loving God, draw us closer to you as we seek to follow Jesus. Help us to share with others the new life you offer us all. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** Christ offers new life for all people.

---

*Margaret Martin (Australian Capital Territory, Australia)*



# Filled with God's love

## Read Philippians 4:10–20

*[God] gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.*

Isaiah 40:29 (NIV)

When I was growing up, petrol stations were called 'service stations' or 'filling stations'. When you drove in, an attendant would come out to your car and ask you what you needed. My dad would always answer, 'Fill 'er up!' The attendant would then pump the petrol, check the oil level, check the air in the tyres and clean the windshield. Dad would never let his car get below a half tank of petrol. He said, 'You never know what might happen, and you might end up somewhere without a filling station close by.'

Dad died two years ago. When I pulled into a petrol station recently, recalling his care for his cars made me think about my spiritual health. Do I let my tank get more than half empty before I turn to God for spiritual nourishment? I realised that, at any time of day or night, wherever I am, whenever I'm feeling low, all I have to do is turn to the Lord. God will not only restore my spirit but also supply all my needs (see Philippians 4:19).

**Prayer:** *O Lord, our God, when we are down and our spirits are empty, remind us to turn to you for hope and strength. Thank you for being our rock and our redeemer. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** When my spiritual tank is empty, God's love can fill me again.

---

Michael D. Stinson (Georgia, USA)

# Stuck for words

## Read Psalm 104:10–18

*How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.*

Psalm 104:24 (NIV)

I never thought that I would ever be stuck for words, but as I gazed in awe at the fiery sunset, I was suddenly speechless. Then, as the city streets became clothed in golden light, the magic happened. Thousands of starlings rose into the sky, and their aerial display began.

Tears of emotion stung my eyes as I watched the flock twirl and spin, constantly changing – swirling, dropping, then rising and falling in a rhythmic aerobatic dance.

Then all at once the murmur was over. The flock dropped almost silently on to the rooftops to roost in safety for the night.

For a brief moment in time, I felt as though I had witnessed the hand of God on our town, and I was blessed by it.

**Prayer:** *For the beauty of the earth, we thank you, Lord. And we pray with the words that Jesus gave us, ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one’ (Matthew 6:9–13). Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** ‘The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it’ (Psalm 24:1).

---

*Pauline Pullan (England, United Kingdom)*

# Sitting with sadness

## Read Proverbs 25:11–20

*Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on a wound, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.*

Proverbs 25:20 (NIV)

Over the years, I have had people tell me, ‘Smile, it can’t be that bad!’ or ‘God doesn’t give us more than we can handle.’ At times, I’ve confided in a friend about a problem, only to be reminded that others have it worse. To be honest, I’ve said and done the same. Pain – our own and others’ – makes us deeply uncomfortable, and in offering such words we try to move quickly through the difficult moments.

But God is teaching me to sit with my own grief, pain and anxiety and that of others rather than trying to rush the healing process. Throughout the Bible, we see examples of lament. In the Psalms and in Ecclesiastes, negative emotions are poured out to God. And Jesus did not hesitate to share his fears with his heavenly Father as he faced death on the cross.

The Bible teaches us that the day will come when God will wipe away every tear (see Revelation 21:4) and turn our mourning into dancing (see Psalm 30:11). In the meantime, as we look with hope towards that future, we can be honest with ourselves and others about what we’re going through. So the next time a friend confides in me, instead of saying ‘God never gives us more than we can handle’, I’m just going to sit and listen.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, help us to listen to those who are hurting without trying to minimise their pain. Remind us that healing will come in your perfect timing. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** I will take time to listen to those who are hurting.

---

*Jillian Bell (Ontario, Canada)*

# Guiding light

## Read John 1:1-9

*You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.*

Ephesians 5:8 (NIV)

My two cats, Jasper and Monica, love to sleep on my bed. It is a warm place, and they feel reassured knowing I'm nearby. But some evenings Monica will fall asleep in some other room of the house and miss bedtime altogether. She will awaken in the dark of night and not know where she is or how to find me. So she calls out pitifully for me to rescue her. Often she is nowhere to be seen, backed into a corner or stuck under furniture. But I don't need to find her; I turn on the light in each room just long enough for her to find her way. Then she joins me, and all is well.

That is a rather silly story, but aren't we all somewhat like Monica? We have a comfortable and reassuring place with God, but sometimes we 'fall asleep' and find ourselves lost. All it takes is a little light from God to guide us. God sent Jesus as the light of the world so that all who believe can find their way to the reassuring presence of God. There are moments when just a little of God's light, reflected through us, can make all the difference for someone.

**Prayer:** *Ever-present God, thank you for sending Jesus to light our way. May we take every opportunity to show others the light of your love. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** Jesus is the source of our power and light.

---

*Tom Ensign (Kansas, USA)*

# God is our rock

## Read Psalm 62:1–8

*The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

Psalm 18:2 (NIV)

Throughout scripture, God's steadfast presence is compared to a rock. This image has stuck with me through the years and was particularly meaningful to me when my sister experienced several bouts of cancer over multiple years.

During that time, I supported my sister from afar by sending her rocks to hold on to as reminders of God's love as she faced numerous tests, treatments and surgeries. Those ordinary rocks served as tangible reminders of God's steadfast love in some of her most trying times. Over the years, she acquired quite a collection, and she always kept a few rocks in her pocket during anxiety-producing tests.

This practice of sharing rocks as reminders of God's love and for encouragement was quite meaningful for us. Sometimes it only takes something small like a rock to lift someone's spirits or to provide loving care. The symbol of the rock can be for all of us a reminder of God's steadfast, comforting presence.

**Prayer:** *Loving God, you are our refuge and stronghold in good times and bad. Help us to reach out to others in ways that remind them of your strength and love. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** I can find strength knowing that God is my Rock.

---

Mary Hayes Jackson (Texas, USA)

# Bruised reed

## Read Isaiah 42:1-4

*A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory.*

Matthew 12:20 (NIV)

Last year during the monsoon season we planted drumstick moringa near our house. The plant began growing nicely. With many green leaves it soon reached a height of two feet. I was so happy, and I hoped that it would grow up fast and become a tree. But one day I saw that the plant had been crushed. I didn't know what happened and felt a deep sadness. I felt sure it would never grow again.

But this year during the monsoon season, I was astonished to see that a moringa plant had appeared again in the same place. It was growing again! I thought about how wonderfully the Lord Almighty created the whole of nature. The fact that this plant was growing again was all the Lord's doing. How amazing!

The same is true for humankind. God can restore us when we are broken by grief, anxiety, fear, disease or sin. God offers new life, promising that 'a bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory'.

**Prayer:** *Holy Lord, thank you for your promise of eternal life. In Jesus Christ's holy name we pray. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** The Lord Almighty can restore my life.

---

*K.D. Macwan (Gujarat, India)*



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**'I very much appreciate reading the contributions from so many different places, and indeed so many different cultures.'**

**'I feel so enriched... reading people's personal experiences born from lives of faith.'**

**'Like is an understatement – I am in love with *The Upper Room* daily devotional!'**

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