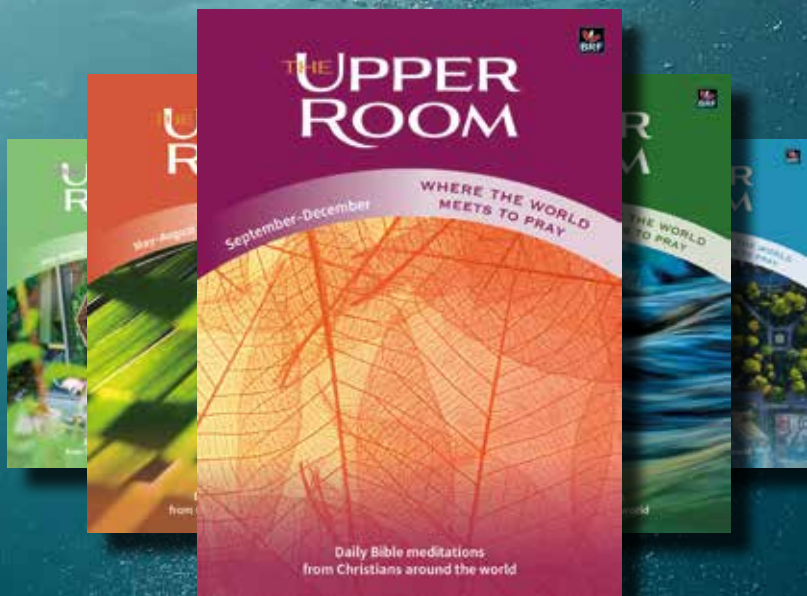


# THE UPPER ROOM

AN INTRODUCTION



31 MEDITATIONS

FROM A WORLDWIDE  
CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## Dear reader,

Whether this is your first time or whether it has been a while since you've picked up a copy of *The Upper Room*, I would like to welcome you personally. We are a worldwide community of believers who engage in daily prayer and devotional practice.

For over 80 years, our magazine has encouraged people everywhere to share their stories of faith. Today it is published in more than 30 languages and is found in over 100 countries. *The Upper Room* is used by individuals, churches, small groups, chaplains and community centres around the globe.

This special edition is designed to give you a sense of how *The Upper Room* can contribute to your life and to your community. It contains 31 meditations written by ordinary people who have encountered God in daily situations. It also includes small-group discussion questions, tips for submitting your writing to *The Upper Room*, and information about ordering copies for yourself and others. Whether you choose to use this for your ministry or for individual practice, we hope you will find inspiration and resources for growing closer to God.

*Lindsay L. Gray*

Editorial director  
*The Upper Room*  
Nashville, Tennessee

## What readers say

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

'I love the varied stories and choice of Bible passages. I look forward to my quiet time with God each day, using these notes. They also guide and widen my prayer horizon. Thank you.'

'I feel so enriched... reading people's personal experiences born from lives of faith, not simply doctrine or cold dogma.'

'I start every day with *The Upper Room*, my Bible, and my prayer list. Just like my father did.'

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



Ministries

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# Good connections

## Read Galatians 3:24–29

*‘My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one.’*

John 17:20–21 (NIV)

Reading an *Upper Room* devotional written by a woman from Russia helped me think about the greatness and goodness of God. I wondered, *What family does she have? Does she work outside the home? What is her daily life like?* I prayed for her and marvelled at the connection we have through our faith in the Lord, even though we live thousands of miles apart.

This bond of faith happens each day in my devotional time as I read *The Upper Room*. The writer for the day may be from England or Ethiopia, from Australia or the United States, or from anywhere else in the world. The experiences and insights they write about always help me in some way and strengthen my faith. I pray for those who share their faith in writing and also for those who work to bring this magazine into publication.

We can also feel a strong bond with those closest to us — those in our neighbourhood, our church, our families and at work. The apostle Paul wrote, ‘Clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony’ (Colossians 3:14, NRSV). No matter where we live, God’s love urges us to love one another and gives us the enduring joy of knowing that we are connected to God and to others by love and faith.

**Prayer:** *Thank you, God, for your gracious love for us that enables us to connect with one another. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** We are connected to one another through God’s love.

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*Joan S. Hutcheson (Georgia, USA)*

# The old watch

## Read Joshua 24:14–17

*Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.*

1 Peter 5:7 (NRSV)

As a minister, I recently received an appointment to a new congregation. I was packing and waiting for the big change in my life when I saw my grandmother's old watch, which she had received from her father. It was more than 60 years old and still working.

The evening before leaving my home for the last time, I thought about my life and recalled the life of my grandmother. The old watch had counted out her hours in this world and the hours of her father's life, and I know it was counting out the hours of my life as well, a life I enjoy as a gift from God. And I thought, *What will my service be like? What example will I leave behind?* I remembered the words of Psalm 90:12: 'So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.'

We do not have much time in this world; we do not know when the hands of our life's watch will stop. But what we do know is that our loving God has given us life and the ability to choose how we will live it. May our lives be full of faith, hope and love for all that God has created!

**Prayer:** *Dear God, lead us on your way and give us wise hearts so we can remain faithful to you, our loving creator. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** How am I showing gratitude for the life God has given me?

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Vladimir Angelov (Ruse, Bulgaria)

# Word of life

## Read Romans 8:1-4

*'If you love me, you will keep my commandments.'*

John 14:15 (NRSV)

I was not excited to hear that the Ten Commandments were to be our topic of study for the next few weeks. I thought, 'Surely, as we are now in the New Testament era, all these laws are behind us?'

Then I recalled reading about a man who became a Christian while in prison. When he was released, he went into a church for the first time in his life. On the wall, in large letters, were listed the Ten Commandments. His heart sank. He had thought he had been set free, but now, how could he keep all those 'Thou shalt not's'? He brought his despair in prayer to Jesus, and when he looked again, they seemed to read differently. Instead of 'Thou shalt not...', he read them as 'You won't...'

If we come to Jesus as Lord and Saviour, we too will find that not only are our sins forgiven, but also we are given new life in Christ; not only are we released from condemnation, but also we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a life of love that is the fulfilment of the law (see Romans 13:10).

As week by week we have been studying these ten wonderful commands, we have been seeing them now, in the light of Jesus' salvation, not as a means by which God condemns us, but a pattern of the life God enables us to live. How wonderful is God's love for us!

**Prayer:** *Lord, please help us to love you with all our hearts and to allow you to love our neighbours through us.*

**Thought for the day:** Through the Spirit, I have God's laws written on my heart.

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*Pauline Lewis (Wales, United Kingdom)*

# Loving our neighbours

## Read Matthew 2:7–12

*'No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.'*

John 15:13 (NRSV)

While serving in Iraq in 2007, I awoke early one morning with an overwhelming feeling of dread. I prayed desperately that God would protect me and shield my family from the pain they would experience if I didn't return home. I wrote a letter to my wife and children and asked my operations officer to ensure my family received it if something happened to me.

Despite fear that made me sick to my stomach, we set out on our mission. On the outskirts of Baghdad, we were halted by the frantic Muslim chief of police with whom I had been working for over a year. He insisted we go no further because the road ahead was arrayed with roadside bombs. After further investigation we found that we had been set up for an attack, and our deaths had been averted by this unexpected messenger.

I still struggle with thoughts of that day, but I take comfort in the friendship that God placed in my path through that devoted and honest man. It would have been easy for him to let us drive past or for me to ignore his warning. My unlikely friend taught me a lesson about love and kindness that day. Our neighbours are often very different from us. God calls us to seek friendship, kindness and understanding even from those who appear different. Loving all our neighbours opens us up to great blessings.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, teach us to show kindness to strangers. Help us to treat others the way we want to be treated and to embrace all people as your children. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** God calls me to show kindness to everyone I meet.

*Chad B. McRee (Texas, USA)*



## *Everyday stories written by everyday people*

For over 80 years, **THE UPPER ROOM** has encouraged people everywhere to share their stories of faith. Today it is translated into more than 30 languages and can be found in over 100 countries.

From small groups to large congregations, these meditations spark conversations and continue to bring people of faith together.

Find out more and subscribe at [brfonline.org.uk](http://brfonline.org.uk)

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