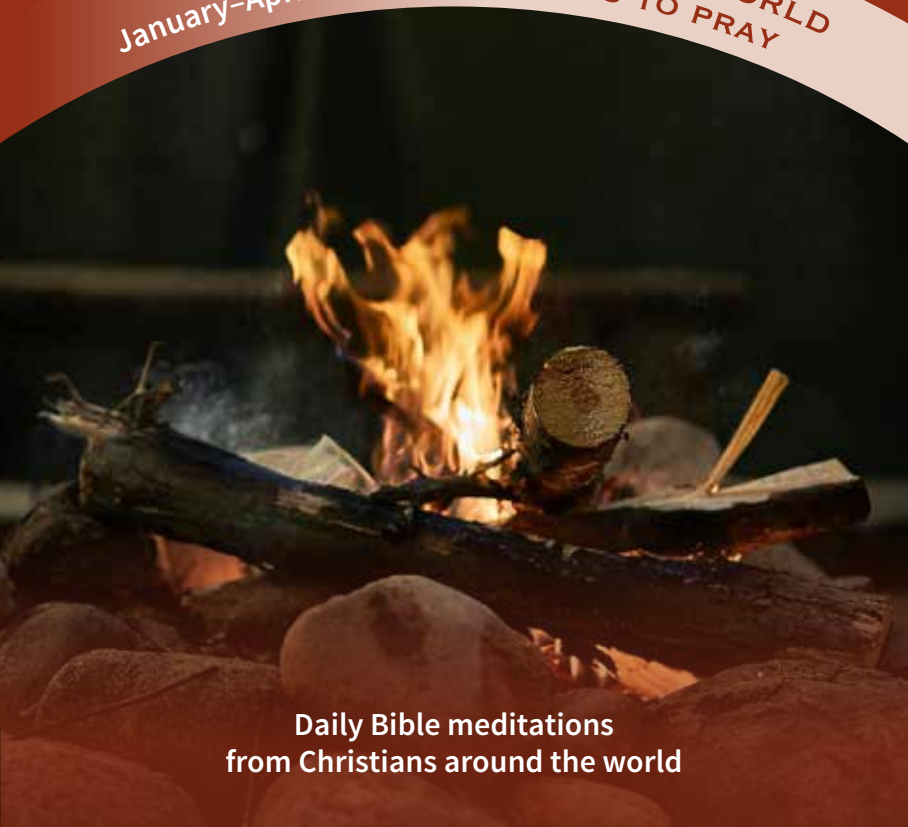




# THE UPPER ROOM

January–April 2025

WHERE THE WORLD  
MEETS TO PRAY



Daily Bible meditations  
from Christians around the world

## EDITIONS

ARMENIAN  
BRITISH SIGN  
BULGARIAN  
BURMESE (Myanmar)  
CHINESE  
ENGLISH  
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Australia  
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India  
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# THE UPPER ROOM

**WHERE THE WORLD MEETS TO PRAY**

**Daniele Och**

UK editor

INVITATIONAL  
INTERDENOMINATIONAL  
INTERNATIONAL

33 LANGUAGES

Multiple formats are available in some languages



**BRF** Ministries

15 The Chambers, Vineyard  
Abingdon OX14 3FE  
**+44 (0)1865 319700 | brf.org.uk**

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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.

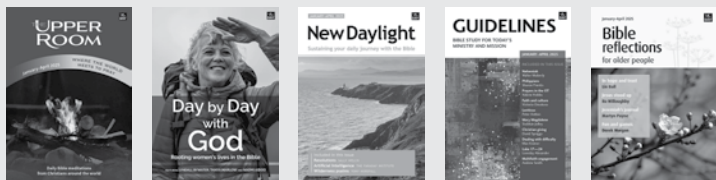
Here are some guidelines to help you make best use of *The Upper Room*:

- 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. If you've enjoyed and benefited from our resources, would you consider paying it forward to enable others to do so too?

Make a gift at [brf.org.uk/donate](http://brf.org.uk/donate)

Thank  
you  
for all your support

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# Remaining open

*I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.*

Isaiah 43:19 (NRSV)

The season of Lent commemorates Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness and offers us an opportunity to prepare for the new reality that Jesus' resurrection makes possible. In this issue of *The Upper Room*, writers describe a variety of wilderness experiences: surgeries and health crises, financial struggles, retirement, moving to new places. Each of these situations is marked by uncertainty and often a sense of isolation. The challenge in wilderness experiences is to remain open and attentive to God's creative presence.

How do we remain open, alert for opportunities to experience the 'new thing' God is doing in our lives and in the world? Our writers offer a range of practices that help us perceive and share God's love, including gratitude journals, intercessory prayer, daily scripture study, calling individuals by name, careful listening and small acts of compassion. I pray that in this season, we will find the practices that open our hearts to all the opportunities God offers, so that we may proclaim to the world the hope and grace revealed in the resurrection.

*Lindsay Gray*  
*Editorial director*

## Where the world meets to pray

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Spanish edition

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

Norma Gabriela Stieben (Argentina)  
María de los Ángeles Vélez (Chile)  
Sister Confianza del Señor (Honduras)  
Roberto Rentería (México)  
Estela Baldeón (Perú)

Gifts to the international editions of  
*The Upper Room* help the world meet to pray.

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# The editor writes...

*Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eye witnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind... I too decided to write an orderly account for you.*

Luke 1:1-3 (NIV)

Imagine being one of the gospel writers. You are setting out to write an account of the most extraordinary life of Jesus of Nazareth. Where do you begin? How do you put into words who Jesus is and all that he did? As one gospel writer says, the world may well not have enough room to fit the books that could be written on the subject (see John 21:25). I find it hard enough sometimes to compose a few paragraphs for an inconsequential email; how do you go about penning a narrative of the life of ‘the Son of the Most High’ (Luke 1:32)?

At the beginning of Luke’s gospel, we get a little glimpse of how he began to tell the story of Jesus. Luke says he decided to write his ‘orderly account’ based on the stories ‘handed down to us by those who from the first were eye witnesses and servants of the word’. That is, he sifted through the numerous accounts from various people who saw and heard what Jesus did and said, and what that meant for them, and he used those accounts to build up a picture of the life of Jesus – who he is and what he is like.

I like to think that *The Upper Room* helps us to do the same thing. I certainly do not claim that the meditations in here carry the same weight of inspiration as the writings of the evangelists or any other biblical author. But I like to think that, as you read the various accounts of the ways that people around the world have met with Jesus and put their trust in him, their meditations help us to better know who Jesus is and what he is like. Reading *The Upper Room* is, of course, no substitute for reading the Bible itself, especially the gospels. But I pray that as you read the following pages – together with the Bible – you may, to quote Luke once again, ‘know the certainty of the things you have been taught’ (1:4).

*Daniele Och*  
*UK editor*



# A new beginning

## **Read Romans 12:1–2**

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

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

I glanced out my front window, and the street was quiet. It was just another day. Last night, however, was much different. We heard the whistle and pop of exploding fireworks, the cheers of excited children and the shouting of jubilant well-wishers ushering in the New Year.

For many, the start of a new year is a time for resolutions, marking a new beginning and starting with a clean slate. One might give up a bad habit, begin a new exercise regimen, eat healthier foods, mend a broken relationship or improve some other aspect of their daily life. All this is done in the hope of having a happier, better and more fulfilled life.

Every New Year's Eve reminds me of my own new beginning in 1967 as a young teen. My new beginning wasn't a resolution to change one or two undesirable traits but complete repentance, and it transformed my life. The Lord Jesus Christ did all the work. I became a new creation. What joy there is in serving Jesus!

While salvation is wonderful, it doesn't stop there. As Christians we must continue to grow in faith. We must be diligent in reading and following God's word. Let us be examples to those around us and glorify God with our lives.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, help us to grow in our relationship with you. May others see our good works and glorify your name. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** When I spend time in God's word, I nourish my soul.

---

*Thomas Davis (Ontario, Canada)*

# Honest anger

## Read Psalm 103:1-8

*The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.*

Psalm 103:8 (NIV)

My mother was my hero and my cheerleader. But then because of alcohol, she was in and out of my life. I remember watching my mother slowly be consumed by her addiction. During the progression of my mother's disease, I was so upset with God that I stopped praying. One day, full of rage, I broke my silence to yell at God for what was happening. I was surprised to sense that God was listening patiently to me, and I began to talk with God more and more each day.

Trusting God during times of sorrow and suffering is difficult. I still have days where it is hard to get out of bed or get into my daily routine without feeling as if I'm just going through the motions. Starting my mornings with prayer and meditation on scripture helps to keep me focused on the day ahead. My heartache remains, but with time and God's help, the pain of losing parts of my relationship with my mum has ceased and my relationship with God has grown.

Loss in relationships can bring sadness, confusion and anger. But my relationship with my mum has taught me that God is with us – through any and all situations. God can handle our anger.

**Prayer:** *O Lord, only you know how deep our hurt is and how long we have lived with it. Help us to release our anger and let go of our bitterness. Thank you for loving us unconditionally. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** I can be honest with God, trusting that God will transform my heart.

---

*Lauren Walker (Texas, USA)*

# In everything

## Read Isaiah 30:15–18

*'In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.'*

Isaiah 30:15 (NIV)

When I was a child, I often saw Javan munia birds in rural rice fields. Farmers consider these birds pests because they eat the rice. Sometimes farmers shoot at the flock with air rifles. Interestingly, when the birds hear the shots, they panic and bump into each other or get stuck in tree branches, causing their own demise.

When sudden change happens, sometimes I'm just like those birds. I react poorly out of shock and panic, and I run into problems. Once when I heard a rumour, I panicked and reacted but later realised the rumour was incorrect. Likewise, often when I heard good news, I would get too excited and make snap judgements that I ultimately regretted.

Then I read Isaiah 30:15: 'In quietness and trust is your strength.' Instead of putting panic and emotion first, I learned that it is better to remain calm and trust God. As Proverbs 19:2 says, 'Hasty feet miss the way!' So I learned to be still, try to think clearly and pray. I learned to trust that even if I stumbled, God would not allow me to fall.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, help us not to follow our panic but rather to trust you in all circumstances. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** In the face of adversity I will trust in God's quiet strength.

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*Ary Cahya (Central Java, Indonesia)*

# Making room

## Read Matthew 3:1–12

*'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'*

Matthew 3:2 (NIV)

There's something about the new year that feels full of hope and possibility. The anticipation of something new gives me the desire to clear out the clutter and create space – both physically and mentally – for what the year will bring.

John the Baptist was called to prepare Israel for the coming Messiah. He preached a message of repentance, urging people to turn their hearts towards God by clearing their lives of sin and making room to receive Christ. We, too, are called to prepare for Christ because God has work for us to do! We can prepare our hearts by repenting of our sin and giving our lives fully to God – clearing out the clutter that keeps us from following the Lord wholeheartedly.

If we want to see God at work in our lives, we must make room for God's presence. What clutter do we need to clear from our habits, our schedules or our hearts to create room for God's Spirit to move in? God wants to begin something new in us, so let's anticipate that gift by making room for it!

**Prayer:** *O God, show us what we need to clear from our lives to make more room for you. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** Today I will create space for the Lord to work.

---

*Sarah Bradstreet (New York, USA)*

# A faithful steward

## Read Luke 16:1–15

*It is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.*

1 Corinthians 4:2 (NRSV)

I was serving as a youth usher at our church. One Sunday morning during the service, as part of my duties, I hurried to the back of the church to gather the bags for the collection of the offering. I put my hand into one of the bags to check if it was empty. Lo and behold, I found a brand new 1,000 Nigerian naira note. I was tempted to take it and keep it for myself. But by the grace of God I was able to overcome the temptation and prove myself to be a faithful steward.

Jesus told his disciples: ‘Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much, and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much’ (Luke 16:10). To be a faithful steward of God’s gifts, one must be honest, God-fearing and loyal – not given to service for the sake of appearances and self-will. This applies not only to our activities and duties within the church but to our day-to-day lives and activities within our families, neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces. God blesses our faithful stewardship.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, help us to be faithful to you in every aspect of our lives. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** I can glorify God by being a faithful steward.

---

*Gideon Idowu (Oyo, Nigeria)*

# The unexpected

## Read Matthew 2:1–12

*'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord.*

Isaiah 55:8 (NIV)

The magi travelled far looking for 'the one who has been born king of the Jews' (Matthew 2:2). They sought him in Jerusalem, but King Herod sent them to Bethlehem, which is where the chief priests and teachers of the law said the Messiah was to be born. There they found the baby Jesus, not in a palace but in a house, with his mother. Had I been one of them, I might have been disillusioned, but scripture gives no indication that they were disappointed by the humble scene.

When God's answers are not what we expect, it can be disappointing. Our church experienced this during the long process of finding a new senior pastor. The church elders scheduled guest preachers for a couple of months and then arranged for an interim pastor to serve for a year while a search was conducted. But two weeks before the interim pastor was to arrive, he informed us that he would not be coming. We were back to square one!

This was not what we had expected, but it was a wonderful opportunity to practise trusting God. God's answers may not be what we expect, but they are always perfect. Like the magi, we can receive them with joy.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, thank you for your awesome power and for your perfect, unexpected answers to our prayers. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** I can trust that God's ways are always best.

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*Lisa Stackpole (Wisconsin, USA)*

# Garden grace

## Read John 15:1–9

*'I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit.'*

John 15:5 (NRSV)

One of my favourite memories is of my dad sitting on a fresh bed of pine straw in the middle of his rose garden. With an unlit pipe in his mouth, he would spend hours clipping, spraying and caring for his rose bushes. He grew the most beautiful fragrant roses imaginable. Dad loved to take them to work and put them on all the office desks. He also spread them throughout our house. I remember the rich fragrance of roses throughout our home, and every time I smell a rose, I think of Dad.

The problem with rose gardening is that rose stems have thorns. Every now and then Dad got pricked, and then he might say something I won't repeat here. Still, he continued to love and care for his roses.

Through our scripture passage I understand Christ as the gardener in our lives. For me, the fruit is God's grace growing within us and also allowing us to make a difference in the lives of others. Yet, like rose stems, our lives have thorns. Sometimes thorns prick me pretty good, and sometimes my thorns prick others as well. I find I need some time each day to focus on God's grace in Christ. Jesus invites us to abide in his love, and I hope we can all find our own unique ways to do that each and every day.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, thank you for caring for us with the attentiveness of a gardener. Help us to abide in your love so that we may show grace to others. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** Focusing on God's love shows me how to extend grace to others.

---

Stephen Smith (Alabama, USA)

# Eyes on God

## Read Psalm 34:1-7

*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.*

Psalm 119:105 (NIV)

My husband was experiencing one illness after another. Before he had time to recover from open-heart surgery, he had to undergo another operation. A few weeks after that operation, he became ill and needed to be hospitalised again. I reached out to God in prayer and asked for help through this ordeal. But I still felt anxious and helpless. Overwhelmed with fear, I began to doubt and to ask where God was during all these trials.

The next day I opened my Bible for my daily devotions and came across 2 Chronicles 20 and decided to read the chapter. As I read, verse 12 stood out to me. Faced with a crisis, King Jehoshaphat cried out to God: 'We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you' (2 Chronicles 20:12). I identified with his heartfelt prayer, and I made it my own. I needed to keep my eyes on God and trust God. A peace and quiet came over me then, and I knew that God was present in our situation.

No matter what happens in our lives, God is with us – even when we do not realise it. And when we call upon God in our distress, we can trust that God hears us and cares about us.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, when we are confronted by trials, lead us to the guidance you have provided in your word. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** When I feel afraid and in doubt, I can find comfort in God's word.

---

*Rita Alexander (Free State, South Africa)*



**UPPER ROOM** has a worldwide readership of some three million. Each daily meditation includes a Bible reading, reflection and prayer. Questions for small group study are also included for each week. All the meditations are written by readers of *The Upper Room*, who seek to share their insights with others.

‘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!’

This edition of *The Upper Room* is published by BRF Ministries, the home of Anna Chaplaincy, Living Faith, Messy Church and Parenting for Faith. As a Christian charity, we inspire, equip and support people of all ages to grow in faith.

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