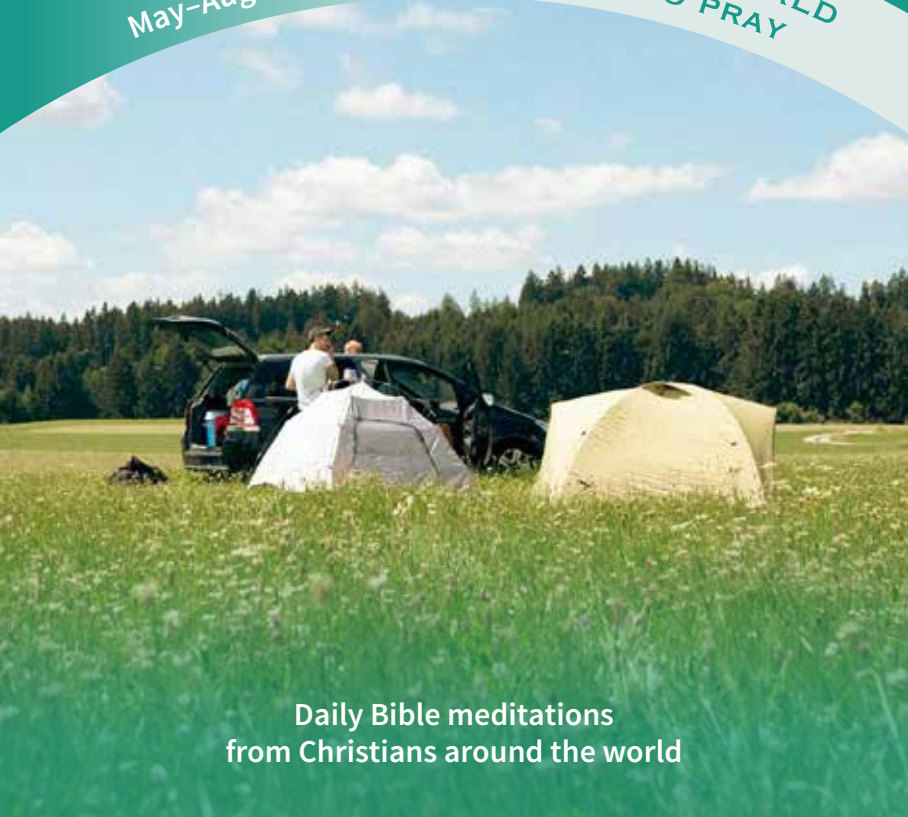


# THE UPPER ROOM

May–August 2025

WHERE THE WORLD  
MEETS TO PRAY



Daily Bible meditations  
from Christians around the world

## EDITIONS

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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



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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.

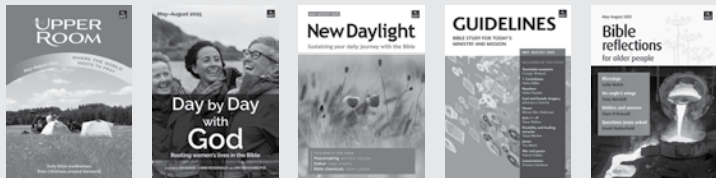
Here are some guidelines to help you make best use of *The Upper Room*:

- 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?

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Thank  
you  
for all your support

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# Just as we are

*Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.*

Acts 2:3–4 (NRSV)

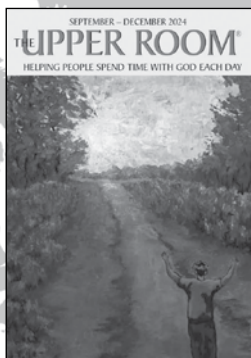
No matter where we look, we can find messages telling us we are not enough. Advertisements proclaim the wonders of products that will improve our lives. Self-help books instruct us on ways to be better leaders, parents, or spouses. Social media posts suggest life hacks that will make daily chores simpler and our lives picture-perfect. With all these messages swirling around, no wonder it is often difficult for us to believe that God already loves us – just as we are!

By sending the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, God demonstrated clearly that each person is valuable and worthy of grace. Tongues of fire rested ‘on each of them’ and ‘all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit’. Not only that, but each person present heard others speaking in their own language. They did not need to change at all to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

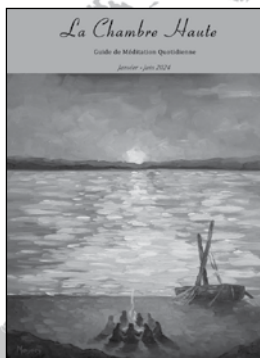
In this issue, writers describe some of the many ways God demonstrates deep, unconditional, unchanging love for us. In cancer diagnoses, failed entrance exams and other life-altering experiences, God is present. God’s love for us does not depend on anything we do or leave undone. The gift of grace assures us that we are enough — just as we are. Let us live in a way that gives thanks for this most precious gift!

*Lindsay Gray*  
*Editorial director*

## Where the world meets to pray



Africa-English edition



French edition

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

*Ghana:* John Adjah, Christel Owoo

*Nigeria:* Emmanuel Afolabi,

Muyiwa Benralph Olaiya, Dozie Ashiegbu

*South Africa:* Percy Mangwedi, Masego Mohlanga,  
Lethabo Molotjwa

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# The editor writes...

*Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.*  
Acts 11:20 (NIV)

The Acts of the Apostles is, as the title says, the story of what the early disciples of Jesus – specifically, the apostles – did following his ascension. In particular, the narrative focuses first on Peter, then on Paul. In this respect, Acts is like much writing of history – it's mostly about the significant deeds of a select group of people, usually monarchs, generals, leaders and so on.

Now and then in Acts, however, we get a glimpse of people in the background of the story. They go almost unnoticed. There are, for example, the believers who sell their property to give to those in need (2:34), the many people who gather to pray for Peter when he is imprisoned by Herod (12:12), and the brothers and sisters who encourage Apollos in his mission plans and provide letters of recommendation for him (18:27). One of the key developments in Acts is how the good news starts to spread to non-Jewish people. Arguably, the first to take this significant step was not Peter, but some men from Cyprus and Cyrene who moved to Antioch to escape persecution (see 11:20).

These people are not the focus of the story of Acts, nor is much written about them in Bible commentaries or preached about in sermons. We do not know their names. Yet their unheralded lives are hugely significant. Antioch, for example, where those unnamed believers started to tell the good news to Greeks, goes on to become the base from which Paul launches his missionary journeys, and it is there that the disciples are first called Christians (11:26).

In all this we see that the real story of Acts is not about the apostles or about the unnamed other believers around them. The real story is about God the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the risen Jesus, working through his faithful ones, great and mundane, named and unnamed, to bring about God's kingdom here on earth.

It's a story that continues, often unnoticed, in countless ways throughout the world today, a small part of which is told in the meditations in this issue. It's a story that I hope, as you read, you find yourself inspired to be a part of.

*Daniele Och, UK editor*



# Every season

## Read Ecclesiastes 3:1–8

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.*

Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NIV)

When my friend Ginny came to visit me in New England, she delighted in the autumn foliage. She had never before experienced leaves with such vibrant shades of red, yellow and orange. The brilliant swamp maple leaves especially caught her eye, so she gathered a few and preserved them to show her students back home.

While Ginny appreciated the spectacular colours as one of God's treasured gifts, often I have a different reaction. At times I miss the beauty of autumn because I'm focused on what comes next – winter. Where I live, winter means blustery winds, ice and nor'easters – strong storms that can deposit more than a foot of snow. Rather than investing in fully living in the present season, I tend to live with a heart and an eye turned towards the next season.

Today's scripture reminds us that seasons change, and each is valuable and purposeful in God's sight. Seasons can be physical, like autumn and winter. Or seasons can be spiritual, like those described in Ecclesiastes. Each season has its own merit and carries God's tender touch. Whatever the season, may we be fully present and alive to God's presence and love.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, thank you for each season. Help us to pause in the present and be attentive to you this day. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** God is present in every season.

---

*Lin Daniels (Massachusetts, USA)*

# God will make a way

## **Read Isaiah 43:16–21**

*I will recount the Lord's faithful acts; I will sing the Lord's praises, because of all the Lord did for us, for God's great favour towards the house of Israel. God treated them compassionately and with deep affection.*

Isaiah 63:7 (CEB)

I grew up in abject poverty, and my education would have ended after primary school. But because of my passion for education and knowledge, I worked to save money to go to secondary school in one of the prestigious institutions in the western part of my home country, Nigeria.

Two years into my secondary education, I had spent all my savings, and my hope of finishing school was dashed. But then God brought people into my life who helped me through. The headteacher of the secondary school gave me a scholarship. Two American missionaries, serving in the town where the school was located, sponsored me and took responsibility for all my other educational expenses. From then on, I was able to continue my education through scholarships from different sources. Now I have several degrees. By God's divine providence, these three individuals raised me from poverty to what I am today.

Through my determination, focus on my goals and the faithful help of community, God made a way for me. Nothing is impossible for God. We need only to have faith and believe in God's promises.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, thank you for sending us helpers when we feel hopeless. May we support others as we have been supported. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** When I support others, I help God care for them.

---

*James Adetunji Kehinde (England, United Kingdom)*

# Words of comfort

## **Read Psalm 18:1-6**

*In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help.  
From his temple he heard my voice.*

Psalm 18:6 (NIV)

I have stage-3 breast cancer, and the chemotherapy treatments I'm receiving are harsh. I'm glad for the medicine, but it leaves me feeling sick, exhausted and in pain. I have worked very hard to stay positive for those around me, pointing to how God sustains us in times of trouble. But sometimes when people ask me how I'm doing, I want to shout, 'I'm having a terrible day! Everything hurts and I'm angry!' When I sit down with God, something changes within me. I can go to God angry and miserable, and God will hear me and bring me comfort.

Here is what I know. Even Jesus wept. Jesus had bad days: hearing that his cousin John had been beheaded, when his friend Lazarus died, certainly when he was betrayed by Judas, and when he looked out over Jerusalem, frustrated that his people would not respond to his love.

It's okay to have bad days. God understands our humanity and still speaks to us with words of comfort – at any time. We will have good days and bad days. God will sustain us through them all.

**Prayer:** *O God, comfort us and wipe away our tears when we are too upset to know what to do. Hold us in the protection of the Holy Spirit, and remind us that you have not forgotten us. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** God loves me and understands me, especially on my bad days.

---

*Kristen Lowe (Wisconsin, USA)*

# Recipients of grace

## Read John 8:1–11

*Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.*

Ephesians 2:4–5 (NIV)

The woman caught in adultery was accused of breaking the law of Moses. Yet her accusers only condemned the woman without mentioning the man. This story reminds us of inequalities and injustices in our society. Women, youth, children and members of minority groups are often targeted by a society's dominant culture. Even in the church, we attack those who dare to do things differently. We have little patience for those who do not conform, and we are quick to judge and exclude others.

Jesus' response to the woman's accusers reminds us that we are all sinners and that although we have been saved by grace, we still sin. Acknowledging our own imperfections cautions us not to rejoice in the downfall of others. Jesus did not come to condemn but to restore sinners to a state of grace, and he passed on this ministry to us. God wants us to work for reconciliation in the world rather than judging others' sins.

As recipients of God's grace, we must continue to spread the message of freedom, motivating people to enjoy the new life offered by Christ. We do all of this from the perspective that we were once sinners found by God's merciful love and are now products of grace.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, help us to walk in the understanding of your grace as we reach out to reconcile others to you. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** I extend God's grace when I am accepting of others.

---

*Emmanuel O. Afolabi (Lagos, Nigeria)*

# Beauty in the fog

## Read Jeremiah 17:7-8

*You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.*

Isaiah 26:3 (NIV)

The weather forecast sounded almost perfect – except for the morning fog. Optimistic that it would soon dissipate, my husband and I walked the quarter-mile trail to the lakeside with coffee in hand and binoculars around our necks. But stubborn, opaque fog shrouded the lake and dashed all hopes of our seeing any wildlife. I complained that our walk was a disappointing waste of time.

Just then a mockingbird broke into song from the obscurity of the swirling fog. I listened to its serenade. And to the distinctive honks of Canada geese. To the splashes of fish jumping on the lake's surface. On our way back to the car, instead of watching for deer, we stopped to marvel at a maple tree's brilliant colours, at clusters of purple berries on the pokeweed and at a squirrel's treetop antics.

Metaphorical fog surrounds us at times. We don't know when it will lift, and our patience wears thin. But when life seems uncertain, it's good to consider God's sovereignty, to remind ourselves that nothing catches God off-guard.

So, while we await the lifting of the fog, we can choose to hush our impatient grumblings and look for traces of beauty. We can entrust our plans and the future to our loving God.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, open our senses to appreciate your blessings even when circumstances disappoint us. Your beauty is everywhere around us, and we are thankful. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** I can look for God's creative work even on foggy days.

---

*Esther Zeiset (Pennsylvania, USA)*

# Saved by grace

## Read Ephesians 2:1–10

*By grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Ephesians 2:8–9 (NRSV)

I used to think I could gain God's love only through works and good deeds. I thought the more I went to church, served in ministries, and was kind and generous, the more I would be favoured. I thought I was worthy only if I did something important.

Our self-esteem often rises and falls depending on our performance and if people approve of us. This can be a real motivation to do great things. But when our self-worth is based on what we do, and we establish our value apart from God, that's when we run into problems.

Today's scripture reminds us that we are saved by grace through faith. This is a gift of God. It is not by our own efforts. We are all equally and abundantly loved. God gave us this gift of grace through Jesus. And when we focus on God's love for us, we are inspired to work joyfully for God's glory.

We love God, and that's why we serve. Our good works are fruits of our faith, not the source of it. Through Jesus' sacrifice, we can trust that we are immensely loved. We are blessed. We are forgiven. And we are worthy.

**Prayer:** *Dear heavenly Father, thank you for your love for us and for the gift of eternal life. Help us to seek your will and to become more like you. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** God's love is a gift freely given.

---

*Joyz Emarie Q. Sumampong-Albert (Davao del Sur, Philippines)*

# Looking ahead

## **Read Philippians 3:7–14**

*The goal I pursue is the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 3:14 (CEB)

Several years ago, my father, a pastor for over 50 years, was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumour. The illness ended his preaching career, and it would have been easy for him to feel sorry for himself. But he did not. When he was moved into a skilled nursing facility, his wheelchair – and eventually his bed – became his new pulpit. He rolled around the halls telling everyone about Jesus. During tornado warnings, when all the beds were moved into the interior corridors, Dad would start singing hymns to encourage the residents and allay their fears. In many ways his influence was more powerful in his last days than ever before.

Some people believe their best days are behind them. The truth is, it's up to us whether our best days are behind or ahead. It's a decision we make every day. In Philippians, the apostle Paul – while in prison awaiting death – proclaims his intention to keep looking up, looking forward and expecting more extraordinary things ahead. Paul admonishes us to leave the past in the past and press forward to a higher calling.

God is not done with us yet. When we feel that our lives lack purpose, we can ask God for fresh, forward-focused vision and trust that our best days are ahead!

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, help us to cherish our memories and be thankful for all that you have done. Give us hope for the future as we put our trust in you. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** I will look forward to each day in anticipation of God's calling.

---

*Rick McKinney (Kentucky, USA)*

# Standing tall

## Read Psalm 119:1-8

*Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.*

James 1:23-24 (NIV)

Until we moved to an apartment with mirrors everywhere, I didn't realise I had developed bad posture. Wide bathroom mirrors reflect my posture, and a big mirror by our hall elevator offers a last-minute check on my appearance. When I see my reflection in these mirrors, I pull back my shoulders and stand tall.

God's word serves as a mirror that reflects any bad posture I've developed in my spiritual life. I've come to understand that holding a grudge makes my shoulders slump with heaviness. Telling even a little lie keeps me awake at night. Reading about good spiritual posture in the Bible makes me want to stand taller.

That's why I read God's word daily and commit it to memory. That's why I write inspirational articles. Any notes I send to my grandchildren include a Bible verse or two. I don't want to be like the person James writes about, who walks away from God's word and forgets it. Instead, I want to reflect God's word in my life.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, use your word to nudge us into right relationships with you and others. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** When I read God's word and apply it to my life, I stand tall spiritually.

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*Shirley Brosius (Pennsylvania, USA)*



**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!’

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