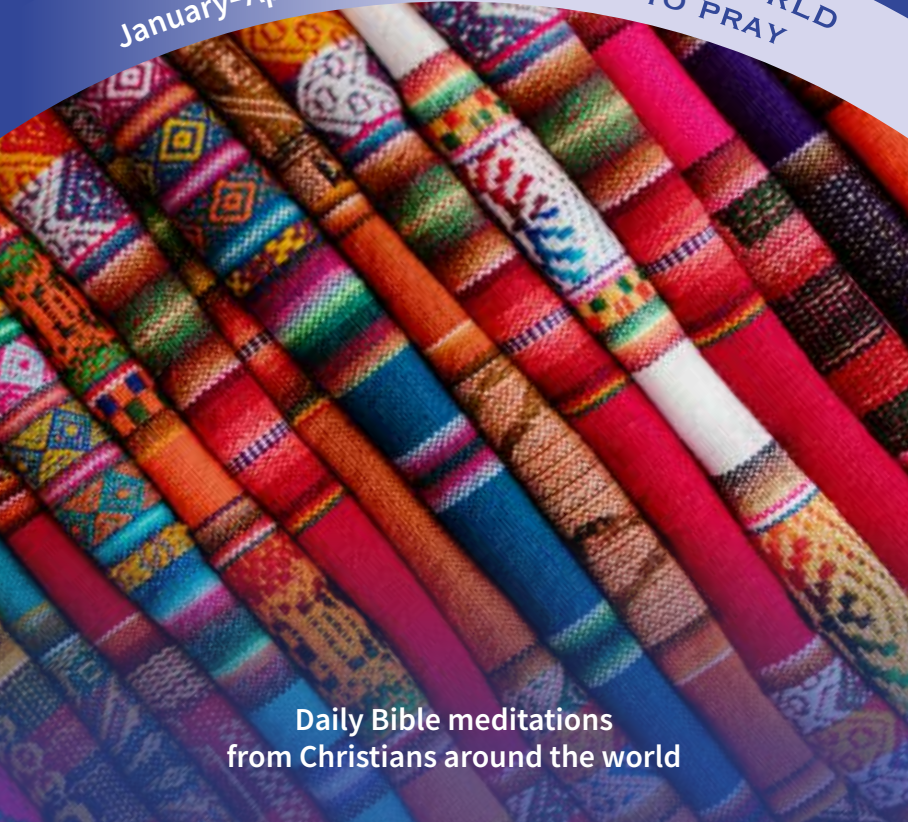


THE UPPER ROOM

January–April 2026

WHERE THE WORLD
MEETS TO PRAY

The background of the lower half of the cover is a close-up photograph of numerous colorful, intricately woven fabrics, likely traditional textiles from various cultures. The fabrics are folded and layered, creating a rich, textured pattern of reds, oranges, yellows, greens, blues, and purples.

Daily Bible meditations
from Christians around the world

EDITIONS

ARMENIAN
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THE UPPER ROOM

WHERE THE WORLD MEETS TO PRAY

Daniele Och

UK editor

INVITATIONAL
INTERDENOMINATIONAL
INTERNATIONAL

32 LANGUAGES

Multiple formats are available in some languages



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Tallinn, Estonia, gpsr.requests@easproject.com

ISBN 978 1 80039 486 5
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Originally published in the USA by The Upper Room® upperroom.org
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Acknowledgements

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Printed and bound in the UK by Zenith Media NP4 0DQ

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.

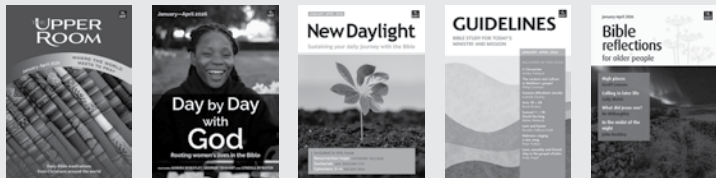
Here are some guidelines to help you make best use of *The Upper Room*:

- 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 BRF Resources 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

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you
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Signs and wonders

I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

Genesis 9:13 (NIV)

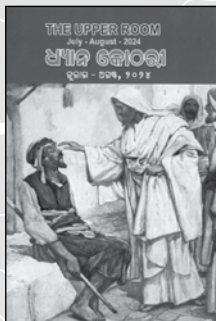
The Bible is full of miraculous signs of God's presence: a rainbow after the earth was flooded, a burning bush that was not consumed, the protection of men in a den of lions, and a fiery furnace, water turned to wine, and walking on water. These are just a few of the wonders we encounter in scripture. To be honest, though, such signs are difficult for me to comprehend and they leave me a bit incredulous. Though my life has been marked by God's grace and love, I have not experienced signs and wonders like these. But I don't think signs of God's presence and love need to be dramatic or supernatural to make a significant difference in our lives.

In this issue of *The Upper Room*, writers describe ordinary events that took on new meaning because, through them, they felt God's presence. A tree growing from a rock, notes in a lunchbox that spark holy conversation, sports teams cheering each other on, an extra place set at the table — each of these are signs of God's presence and love in the world. When we pay attention to and receive ordinary moments of grace as reassurance of God's love and care, our lives become richer and more connected to God's ongoing work in the world. And when we allow this deeper connection to the Divine to shape our words and actions, we make God's presence a little easier for others to see as well. How will you remain alert to signs of God's presence in the coming weeks?

Lindsay Gray

Editorial director, The Upper Room

Where the world meets to pray



Odia edition



Telugu edition

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

- Carol Peter (India)
- Jaiprakash D. Roy (India)
- Hitesh J. Solanki (India) • Elina Yeptho (India)
- Amira Emmanuel (Pakistan)

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The Upper Room help the world meet to pray.
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The editor writes...

'Our Father in heaven...'

Matthew 6:9 (NIV)

There's a phenomenon in the UK, apparently unique to us, called 'TV pickup'. This is a sudden spike in energy demand on the national grid during ad breaks in popular television events, as millions of homes around the country turn on their kettles. It is a less frequent occurrence now, as the advent of streaming services over the past two decades has changed our television viewing habits. Still, there are occasions like major sporting events when you know that as you watch the live broadcast, millions of others are at the same time doing likewise. It's a small reminder that you are part of a wider community.

The more observant readers among you will have noticed that the short prayer at the end of each meditation is always written using plural pronouns – *we, us* and *our* – rather than singular – *I, me* and *my*. I am not sure of the origin of or reasons for this editorial policy, but I suspect it has something to do with the fact that the Lord's prayer is recorded (in Matthew's and Luke's gospels) in the same way – '*Our Father... give us... as we forgive...*' It's a small reminder that since its origins, the Christian faith has been practised in community.

As the strapline on the cover says, *The Upper Room* is 'where the world meets to pray'. I hope you find it an encouragement that, as you use this issue in your daily devotionals, the passage you read and the prayer you pray is one that thousands of others around the UK, and millions around the world, are likewise reading and likewise praying with you.

A happy and blessed new year to you – or should I say, to us!

Daniele Och

UK editor

A relationship that lasts

Read Hosea 11:1–4

'I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them.'

Hosea 11:4 (NIV)

I stood alone on the rooftop, watching the city celebrate with fireworks at the promise of the coming year. A failed relationship had left me feeling adrift and unsure of my place in the world. I couldn't shake the feeling of loneliness that enveloped me. As the clock struck midnight on New Year's Eve, I felt a mix of emotions – doubt, insecurity, but also a glimmer of hope for the year ahead.

In the midst of my solitude I am comforted by God's promise in Hosea 11:4. God's love, like cords of human kindness, reminded me of the love parents can give their children. Despite my brokenness, God embraced me as a father would his hurting child, lifting me up with tender care and providing peaceful comfort. I remembered that God has me in the palm of God's hand. While many people had let go of me, God was with me, holding my hand.

When I fully dedicated my life to Christ, this lasting relationship gave me the courage to form more meaningful ones with others. In my family now, though there are shortcomings, we believe that God is the foundation of our life together.

Prayer: *Thank you, heavenly Father, for your love and support. Reassure us that we are safe with you when we feel uncertain or alone. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Thought for the day: Only God can wipe every tear, cure every heartbreak and bring us unspeakable joy.

Joseph Talusan (Laguna, Philippines)

To be continued

Read Philippians 1:1–11

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:6 (NRSV)

Growing up in the 1970s, before on-demand programming and video streaming, my family had one TV with three major channels. When the dramatic miniseries became a popular genre and a new episode aired, we would watch intently as tension built. Then suddenly the screen would go dark, and the words ‘to be continued’ would appear, leaving us in suspense. Having to wait a week to watch the next episode in the series was frustrating.

When it comes to our life stories, ‘to be continued’ could be God’s tag line. We anxiously wait – often in frustration and disappointment – for our circumstances to change, for a new chapter to begin or for an old one to close. But we need not despair. God is actively involved in our lives.

Today’s scripture encourages us that God will finish the good work God has started in us. God does not leave us disconnected or without purpose. At times we may feel we are in a to-be-continued phase of our lives, but in these moments, we can stay connected to God through scripture reading, prayer, wise counsel and church community.

Prayer: *Dear God, help us to trust you with the story of our lives. Amen.*

Thought for the day: I will look forward to what God has in store for me.

Stephanie Quattlebaum (Georgia, USA)

Never lost to God

Read Matthew 7:7-8

'The Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

Luke 19:10 (NRSV)

The money I had put aside for my church offering had somehow disappeared. It wasn't a huge sum, but I searched carefully everywhere inside the house and even looked outside, thinking it might have blown away through the open front door. Eventually I gave up and forgot all about it for several months.

On New Year's Day, I was cleaning the house and decided to rotate the seat cushions on the sofa. As I removed the last one, I found my missing money, still folded, resting against the inside of the sofa arm. It must have fallen out of my pocket and worked its way down into the folds of the couch as we sat on it day after day.

As I replayed in my mind what had happened, it occurred to me that I would have found the money sooner had I not stopped looking. I believe that is the kind of persistence we are called to in today's quoted scripture verse. I can also see how this idea extends to our relationship with God or, rather, God's relationship with each of us.

Although our sinful actions separate us from God and we at times turn our backs on God, we are never lost to God. Like a gentle shepherd, God persists in seeking us until we are found.

Prayer: *Thank you, God, that we are never out of your sight and always on your mind. Help us to remain in your presence in humble obedience to your will. Amen.*

Thought for the day: I am valuable to God.

Arlene Timber-Henry (St Maarten)

From fear to faith

Read Colossians 1:15–17

By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible.

Colossians 1:16 (KJV)

Shortly after our daughter was born, while my husband was holding her and offering her a bottle, the nurse noticed that our baby was struggling to breathe. Pushing my husband aside, the care team quickly surrounded our tiny baby who was in distress and admitted her to the neonatal intensive care unit.

Later, after visiting her, I left the hospital with a heavy heart and racing thoughts. I felt helpless as a mother. As I was driving away from the hospital, looking straight ahead, I had an unobstructed view of the glistening sea and the beautiful blue sky. In that moment, I was keenly aware of God's Spirit, assuring me that God is the creator of all things. Surely I could trust God to take care of my daughter, whom God had also created.

My heart lifted, and my worries turned to praise for the God who knows me, sees me and cares for me. God's presence with me strengthened my heart and shored up my faith. Even now, 40 years later, when we celebrate our daughter's birthday, I still recall that day. And I praise God all over again for being with me and with her that day and every day.

Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, thank you for knowing us and for being with us always. Amen.*

Thought for the day: I am known, seen and cared for by God.

Amy C. (Virginia, USA)

Finish well

Read 2 Timothy 4:5-8

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

James 1:12 (NIV)

I've run 25 marathons, and I've enjoyed and finished strong in many of them. However, some were not so enjoyable. There was one where I struggled with considerable pain and fatigue and wondered if I could finish the race. At the 18-mile mark, I was in so much pain that I had to slow my pace and take short breaks. But I received encouragement from one of the course volunteers and other runners experiencing similar struggles. To finish the race, I needed inner strength, determination, endurance and perseverance.

When I eventually crossed the finish line, my doubts and thoughts of the struggles, aches and pains vanished. A finisher's medal was placed around my neck. Even though I was in pain, I was glad that I had persevered to finish the race.

The course of life and our spiritual journey can be like running a marathon – at times enjoyable and at others full of difficulties and uncertainties. But with the Holy Spirit moving in us and the strength God gives, we can persevere. Then, as we draw near to life's finish line, the struggles, pains and disappointments we experienced will fade as we look to our reward – the crown of life – in heaven.

Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, grant us strength to keep the faith, and help us to persevere as we journey with you. Amen.*

Thought for the day: God gives me the strength to persevere.

Donald Wollenhaupt (Georgia, USA)

In God's hands

Read Isaiah 42:5–9

I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I have taken you by the hand and kept you.

Isaiah 42:6 (NRSV)

In my work with adults with developmental disabilities, I spend part of my time in the wood workshop. Often I sit next to Luca, who loves to sand wooden spoons. Sometimes he starts to rub across the grain of the wood, rather than with it. Then I reach out my hand and gently redirect him. Sometimes he becomes preoccupied with rubbing one spot over and over, missing the edges and corners. Again, I take his hand and hold it in the place that still needs attention. If Luca didn't trust me, our collaboration would turn into a struggle. But with trust and respect for each other, we are able to make something beautiful.

Isaiah's words about the divine call to righteousness remind me of my work with Luca. God wants to take us by the hand, not because we can't do anything ourselves but because sometimes we need a bit of guidance or redirection to make our efforts more effective. God wants to teach us, giving us helpful limits while we are still finding our way. Trusting in God who takes us by the hand is what turns our activity into righteousness, producing fruits that are beautiful, true and good.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help us to walk in your ways. May your hand guide, redirect and focus us as we participate in your work of love. Amen.*

Thought for the day: I will trust God's hand to guide me in the way I should go.

Lory Widmer Hess (Bern, Switzerland)

Where God leads

Read Acts 9:10–19

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.

Psalm 25:4 (NRSV)

One winter morning as I was walking to the church where I am the pastor, I thought of an older couple that lived down the street and wondered if they would like to attend some upcoming church activities. At the end of their slippery driveway was a newspaper, which I picked up and brought to their front door.

My neighbour was pleasantly surprised to see me, and she invited me inside for some tea. I was able to sit with her and her husband for a while. As we drank tea and chatted, she said, ‘God is good’, explaining that she had been wondering how she would get the newspaper. She went on to describe her feelings of loneliness and told me that she believed God had sent me to cheer her up.

What I did wasn’t much. I just stopped by a neighbour’s house, gave them their newspaper, delivered a church newsletter and stayed to chat. However, we both believed that God’s hand was at work. I was grateful to know my neighbours better and especially to feel that God had used me as an instrument of God’s love. We never know how and when God might use us, so let us always be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Prayer: *Holy Spirit, we thank you for leading and guiding us. Help us to be open to your promptings and to be instruments of God’s love wherever we go. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*

Thought for the day: I will be open to where God leads me today.

Rebecca L. T. Cho (Massachusetts, USA)

God is with us

Read Hebrews 11:1-16

Come near to God and he will come near to you.

James 4:8 (NIV)

I was at a loss and feeling depressed as I finished a difficult freshman year of college. I had dreamed of becoming a doctor, but I had failed a class and lost my scholarship. Then at the end-of-semester gathering of my choir, we selected slips of paper with Bible verses on them from a basket. I got James 4:8, and I took it to heart.

That summer I volunteered at a camp ministry, where I was more than assured that God was still with me. In the forests, fields and creek, while working to make a difference in kids' lives, God met me. I knew that God was still very real and attentive to my situation.

Hebrews 11:6 emphasises the importance of faith: 'Without faith it is impossible to please God.' And the whole of Hebrews 11 offers the encouragement of those who have gone before us, responding in faith to God. Times of closeness with God encourage us to look ahead in hope, knowing that there is a God 'who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us' (Ephesians 3:20).

Prayer: *Dear God, give us hope and faith so that we may reach out and embrace what you call us to, knowing that you are always with us. Amen.*

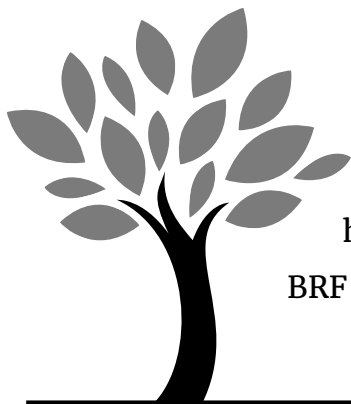
Thought for the day: Even when I feel lost, God knows where I am.

Nathaniel Lawrence (Oregon, USA)



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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, BRF Resources, Messy Church and Parenting for Faith. As a Christian charity, we inspire, equip and support people of all ages to grow in faith.

Also available in giant print for the visually impaired. For more information, see page 156.

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