

THE UPPER ROOM®

WHERE THE WORLD MEETS TO PRAY

May–August 2018



EDITIONS

ARMENIAN
BULGARIAN
BURMESE (Myanmar)
CHINESE
DUTCH
ENGLISH
Africa
Australia
Chinese/English
India
Indonesia
Indonesian/English
Japan
Korean/English
Korean/English/
Japanese
Myanmar
Philippines
Singapore
Sri Lanka
United Kingdom
United States
ESTONIAN
FRENCH
GREEK
GUJARATI
HINDI
HUNGARIAN
IBAN/ENGLISH
ILOKANO
INDONESIAN
ITALIAN
JAPANESE
KANNADA
KOREAN
MALAYALAM
NEPALI
NORWEGIAN
ODIA
POLISH
PORTUGUESE
Africa
Brazil
Portugal
RUSSIAN
SINHALA
SPANISH
Caribbean
Mexico
South America
United States
SWEDISH
TAMIL
TELUGU
THAI
URDU

THE UPPER ROOM®

WHERE THE WORLD MEETS TO PRAY

Susan Hibbins

UK Editor

INTERDENOMINATIONAL
INTERNATIONAL
INTERRACIAL

33 LANGUAGES

Multiple formats are available in some languages

The Bible Reading Fellowship

15 The Chambers, Vineyard
Abingdon OX14 3FE
brf.org.uk

The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) is a Registered Charity (233280)

ISBN 978 0 85746 606 8
All rights reserved

Originally published in the USA by The Upper Room®

US edition © The Upper Room®

This edition © The Bible Reading Fellowship 2018

Cover image by Rebecca J Hall

Acknowledgements

Scripture quotations marked NRSV are taken from The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Anglicised Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version (Anglicised edition) copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 by Biblica. Used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Publishers, an Hachette UK company. All rights reserved. 'NIV' is a registered trademark of Biblica. UK trademark number 1448790.

Extracts marked KJV are from the Authorized Version of the Bible (The King James Bible), the rights in which are vested in the Crown, reproduced by permission of the Crown's Patentee, Cambridge University Press.

Extracts from CEB are copyright © 2011 by Common English Bible.

Printed by Gutenberg Press, Tarxien, Malta

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 to the magazine 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 *Upper Room* users 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 magazine 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.

*Susan Hibbins
UK Editor*

In times of/For help with . . .

Below is a list of entries in this copy of *The Upper Room* relating to situations or emotions with which we may need help:

Anger: Jul 27; Aug 8

Assurance: May 22; Jun 14, 29; Jul 11, 31;

Aug 10, 27

Bible reading: May 9, 10, 19; Jun 2;
Jul 29; Aug 1, 6, 13, 16

Change: Jul 3, 8

Christian community: May 6, 29; Jun 3, 6,
19; Jul 4, 28, 30; Aug 9, 15

Compassion: May 16; Aug 22, 29

Creation: May 11; Jun 24; Jul 2, 23; Aug 24

Doubt: May 31; Jun 15, 26; Jul 5, 16

Encouragement: May 5, 10, 24, 28; Jun 6,
8; Jul 9, 16, 31

Family: May 9, 13, 20; Jun 2, 17, 29;
Aug 5, 13

Fear: May 4, 12, 23, 25; Jun 14; Jul 3, 18,
24, 27

Forgiveness: May 23; Jul 21

Friendship: May 23; Jul 9, 28; Aug 28

Giving: May 17; Jun 7, 10; Jul 4; Aug 14

Grief: May 21; Jun 12, 21, 29; Jul 7; Aug 28

God's goodness/love: May 5, 18, 22;
Jun 11, 12; Jul 2, 10, 31; Aug 19, 20, 28

God's presence: May 4, 24, 25; Jun 3, 9,
21; Jul 5, 7, 16; Aug 10, 30, 31

God's provision: May 1, 11; Jun 6, 20;
Jul 11, 18, 25; Aug 3, 11

Gratitude: May 8, 30; Jun 20; Jul 2, 11,
23; Aug 2, 18

Growth: May 3, 14, 18, 26; Jun 5; Jul 1;
Aug 1, 15

Guidance: May 18, 21; Jun 5, 30; Jul 3, 8,
22; Aug 7, 9

Healing/illness: May 8, 13, 16, 20, 24;
Jun 14; Jul 12, 19; Aug 8, 20, 30

Hope: May 20; Jun 18; Jul 12; Aug 5, 24

Hospitality: May 29; Aug 26

Job issues: May 6, 24; Jun 10, 16, 30;
Jul 25; Aug 3, 21

Judging: May 26; Jun 23; Jul 26; Aug 14,
22, 26

Living our faith: May 3, 9, 31; Jun 15, 22,
24; Jul 1, 10, 19; Aug 7, 25, 29

Loss: May 16; Jul 28; Aug 4

Mental illness: May 13

Mission/outreach: Jun 22, 27, 28; Jul 20,
24

New beginnings: May 11, 15, 23; Jun 16,
22, 28

Obedience: May 27; Jun 11, 16, 30; Jul 6,
20; Aug 25

Parenting: May 9, 18, 22; Jun 11, 17; Jul 31

Patience: May 10, 20, 27; Jun 18, 30;
Aug 9, 18

Peace/unrest: May 4, 7; Jun 8; Jul 27;
Aug 10, 31

Prayer: May 7, 13, 30; Jun 13, 19, 25;
Jul 8, 15, 30; Aug 8, 15, 31

Renewal: May 8, 11, 16; Jul 14

Repentance: May 23, 26; Jun 23; Jul 13

Salvation: Aug 16

Serving: May 17, 29; Jun 4, 7, 27; Aug 17,
22

Sin: May 14; Jul 13

Speaking about faith: Jun 22; Jul 15, 21;
Aug 17

Spiritual gifts: Jun 22; Jul 17; Aug 14,
26, 29

Spiritual practices: May 3, 27, 30; Jun 2,
5; Jul 6, 14, 23; Aug 1, 2, 23

Tragedy: Aug 28

Trust: May 1, 12; Jun 3, 7, 15, 26

Weakness: Jun 14; Jul 22, 24; Aug 3, 5, 21

Worry: May 6, 7; Jun 3, 9; Jul 14, 29;

Aug 4, 18, 23

Ordinary time

Jesus said, ‘Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’
Matthew 28:20 (NRSV)

After the Day of Pentecost, Christians who follow a liturgical calendar enter the season known as ‘Ordinary Time’, which lasts until Advent and occupies a significant portion of the Christian calendar. The name seems fitting since no major Christian festivals occur during this season.

When I was young, I thought Ordinary Time sounded boring. We weren’t actively anticipating Christ’s birth at Christmas or focusing on the disciplines of Lent. Ordinary Time felt long, uneventful and thoroughly unexciting.

Now that I am an adult, Ordinary Time holds for me the comfort of familiarity. It also holds particular promise: God is with us – not just for big events or important celebrations but in the unremarkable moments of each day.

Some of the meditations in this issue describe the comfort and peace, as well as the challenges, that come with a deep sense of God’s presence in daily life. The idea that God is with us is a thread that runs throughout scripture, and it appears often when I read devotional writing. That God is with us during the extraordinary moments of our lives as well as the mundane and uneventful ones is a message that feels particularly appropriate for the long, unremarkable season of Ordinary Time. The assurance that God is with us today and always is worth hearing again and again, and it may make this season not quite so unremarkable after all.

*Lindsay L. Gray
Editorial Director, The Upper Room*

Editions of *The Upper Room* daily devotional guide are printed in:

- Australia
- Indonesia
- Malaysia
- Myanmar
- The Philippines
- Singapore
- Thailand

Indonesia

Every month, the publishing team of *Saat Teduh*, the Indonesian edition of *The Upper Room*, visits a local prison. They lead a service for the inmates, pray with them, and share copies of the devotional.

Thailand

The publisher of the Thai edition of *The Upper Room*, The Church of Christ in Thailand, broadcasts each day's meditation on the radio, reaching people in rural areas of the country.



The Editor writes...

Recently I was reading the story in John's Gospel in which Jesus spent time talking with a Samaritan woman who had come to get water from the well where Jesus was resting (John 4:1-26). The conversation includes some of Jesus' most well-known words: 'Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life' (v. 14, NIV). After talking with Jesus, the woman is so inspired by what he has told her that she abandons her water jar to run back to the town and tell all her neighbours about him; many of them later believed in him after listening to Jesus themselves.

I wonder what the woman thought about this milestone in her life in later years, perhaps as she became older and more reflective. Did she close her eyes and remember that far-off day, the sunshine and the heat, the heavy water jar that she gratefully set down to talk to the young man who sat by the well? Did she recall Jesus' words about living water, not realising at the time that it was the most precious conversation she would ever have? Perhaps she remembered his kindness, his smile, his willingness to talk to her, a woman whom many regarded as having dubious morals. She didn't know who Jesus was when she talked to him that day, but did she try to get news of him and his teaching after he left? How did she live her life with Jesus' words in her heart?

What is our own reaction to Jesus' words? Do they change our lives? Sometimes when we read the Bible, especially familiar passages, we might feel that they have nothing new to add to our understanding. Yet there are times when the words seem to leap off the page and speak directly to our situation, providing comfort, challenge or direction. In our own time, Jesus' living water is available to us as surely as it was for one individual one hot day by a well.

*Susan Hibbins
UK Editor*

The Bible readings are selected with great care, and we urge you to include the suggested reading in your devotional time.

Eating rocks?

Read Psalm 37:1–9

Let him lead me to the banquet hall, and let his banner over me be love.
Song of Songs 2:4 (NIV)

I found my toddler on the stairs, contentedly shoving pebbles into his mouth. I fished the pebbles out and carried him to the table to eat dessert. He didn't appreciate that. He flailed and screamed, frustrated that I would tear him away from his treasure. But when he finally saw the chocolate cake at the table, he stopped screaming and his eyes widened with joy.

The adults at the table laughed, because who would willingly choose pebbles over chocolate cake? But don't I do the same every day? I contentedly fill my life with meaningless activities and things. I grin, happy with what I've gained. I'm just like my son: sitting on the stairs, thinking I have found pure joy. But really God wants to invite me to the banquet table where I can find true joy. I am frustrated when what I want is taken away, not realising what glory is waiting just beyond my sight. I want to delight in the Lord and replace my own desires with desires that lead to God. I want him to teach me to love and seek true joy.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to trust in your love. Direct our thoughts and desires toward you and the true joy you offer. Amen

Thought for the day: Today I will let God lead me to the banquet table.

Christie Thomas (Alberta, Canada)

Rooted in Christ

Read Ephesians 3:14–19

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Colossians 2:6–7 (NIV)

On a sunny day I visited a beautiful Scottish botanic garden, famous for its hilly woodland trail. My husband drew my attention to an ancient Scots pine tree. It rose out of the ground at an acute angle and looked as if it would fall at any moment onto a footpath. The weight of the long, thick trunk must have been enormous. But the manager of the estate said it was safe. The strength and amazing capability of the root system was saving it from collapse, though the power was unseen to the onlooker. The tree survived because its roots sank deep to provide a stable and strong foundation, bringing life-giving water to every part of the tree.

We who belong to the Lord Jesus are rooted firmly in him, an anchor for our faith. He is our foundation, and through the Holy Spirit we drink his water of life springing up within us.

On our journey of faith there are times when we are buffeted by the storms of life and we can be tested to breaking point. But like the tree we don't collapse, because Christ is holding us, lovingly working out his purposes for our good and his glory.

Prayer: *Dear Lord Jesus, help us to become rooted in you, knowing that you will never let us fall. Amen*

Thought for the day: We are grounded and safe in Jesus' love.

Janette Hughson (West Lothian, Scotland)

Your way over ours

Read Matthew 6:16–18

When you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face.

Matthew 6:17 (NIV)

Three weeks into my church study group on Christian disciplines, I introduced the members to fasting as an important component of prayer life. Then I gave practical instructions so that they could try fasting during the week and return with stories of their experiences.

When we gathered again, I could hardly wait to hear their accounts of the heavens opening up, of burning bushes and flashes of lightning, or at least stories of a still, small voice. The first person to speak said, ‘I just felt hungry.’ Her honesty rattled me and deflated my enthusiasm. Not one person in the group reported a ‘mountaintop experience’. Our experiment with fasting had failed – or so I thought.

When I had recovered from my disappointment, I discovered a beautiful truth about fasting. By fasting, we demonstrate our love for Christ in a very tangible way. We practise honouring God over our own passions and desires. For a short period of time, we choose not to eat because following the way of Christ is more important than our appetites as we pray, ‘Not what I want, but what you want.’

The Christian journey rarely consists of burning bushes and lightning bolts. The euphoria, if it comes at all, is generally short-lived. Instead, we learn to value the way of Christ over our own ways. One mundane day at a time, we are being transformed into the image of Christ.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, throughout this day, help us to choose your way over ours. Amen*

Thought for the day: I can act on my faith regardless of how I feel.

Kevin Thomas (Alabama, US)

When we weep

Read Jeremiah 31:15–17

The Lord says: ‘A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.’

Jeremiah 31:15 (NIV)

My son was just seven years old when he watched the news report on TV announcing that our country was going to war. His brother asked a couple of questions about war, and then they went off to play. That evening, when the seven-year-old went to bed, I heard him crying. When I asked what was wrong, he told me he was worried about the war. I explained that it was far, far away and that he would be safe. But he just sobbed more. As I held him, he calmed down and said, ‘I am not worried for me, Mummy; I am worried about all the mummies crying!’ It touched my heart to hear his words, and I was amazed at how far his thinking had gone. Of course, he was quite right – many mothers would be crying. So we prayed for them and for all who might be hurt by the war.

In today’s passage from Jeremiah, we read that God hears our weeping and understands our sadness. He promises that those weeping for the lost will be comforted and promises us hope for the future. He is not distant or uncaring, but comforts and strengthens us in our grief.

Prayer: *God of comfort, be with all those who are weeping today. Hasten the day when war will be no more. Amen*

Thought for the day: When I weep, God offers me comfort and hope.

Pam Lewis (Essex, England)

Shadow of God's wings

Read Psalm 63:1–11

You have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.
Psalm 63:7 (NRSV)

As I began my morning stroll, the Texas air was already heavy with humidity and hot from intense sunshine. Much of my route was in direct sunlight, and I found myself longing for the shade cast by the few trees lining the road. When I found some shade, the refreshment and coolness beckoned me to slow my pace.

As I strolled through one of the larger shadows, I heard a bird singing in the branches overhead. I thought of the verse quoted above: 'In the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.' Just as the bird sang joyfully from the shaded tree branches, I too was rejoicing in the shadow of the tree's protection from the heat as I continued my walk toward home.

When we are struggling, life can feel like the furnace of a hot summer. Yet in the shadow of God's wings we can grow in faith despite difficulties that threaten to overwhelm us. Through Christian fellowship, prayer and scripture, we can rejoice in God's goodness as we walk toward our heavenly home.

Prayer: *Father God, renew us in the shadow of your wings. Help us to abide in your presence through prayer and your word each day of our lives. Amen*

Thought for the day: In the shadow of God's presence, I can find refreshment.

Montra C. Weaver (Texas, US)

Wilderness experience

Read Matthew 4:1–11

Jesus answered [the tempter], ‘It is written, “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’

Matthew 4:4 (NRSV)

Because I was unable to find work or somewhere to live after I left college, my life was uncertain. Then I reread Matthew's account of Jesus' struggle in the wilderness and my perspective changed. I began to see parallels between Jesus being tempted to satisfy his physical hunger and my own situation. The way Jesus overcame temptation showed me a way to resist my need to control what was happening to me.

My summer of uncertainty led me to consider what it meant for Jesus to be hungry. His response to temptation was simply that 'one does not live by bread alone'. Jesus was referring to the need for us to be hungry for God. By reclaiming my hunger for God, I was able better to appreciate that angels ministered to Jesus after his time of trial in the wilderness (Matthew 4:11).

I now realise that my Christian community became those angels to me, giving me sustenance and support. The more spiritually hungry I became, the more thankful I was for the grace they showed me. Today, whenever I face uncertainty, I am no longer overcome by panic. Instead, I view it as a time to draw closer to God and look for ways to minister to others.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to hear our neighbours' cries of suffering. May we be witnesses to your mercy for everyone we encounter. Amen

Thought for the day: In uncertain times, I can turn to God and to my community of faith.

Trevor B. Williams (Tennessee, US)

Just a prayer away

Read Jeremiah 29:10–14

The Lord says, ‘You will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.’

Jeremiah 29:12 (NIV)

One night I suddenly woke up at midnight and spent two hours trying to get back to sleep. Unresolved problems and burdens from the previous days preyed on my mind. Then I remembered something from one of my minister's sermons. He said, 'If any night you find you cannot sleep, pray. It is a privilege and gift to talk with God.'

In the silence of that night, I started to pray and tell God many things. It was very enjoyable. I talked about my family, friends, desires and plans. And when I told God about my problems and burdens, I felt as if all of them were gone. My heart felt light and filled with joy and peace.

I soon fell asleep again. When I woke up the next morning, I knew that I had experienced a very special and valuable moment when I realised how close God always is to me – just a prayer away.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for always hearing us when we pray and for being with us in every situation. We pray as your Son taught us, saying, 'Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.'*

Thought for the day: Prayer can change everything.

Meliana Santoso (East Java, Indonesia)

Blooming again

Read James 5:13–18

God will save you from the hunter's trap and from deadly sickness. God will protect you with his pinions; you'll find refuge under his wings.

Psalm 91:3–4 (CEB)

One hot and humid summer, we were away from home on a two-week trip. Before leaving, I had watered the plants, including two geraniums that were full of brilliant red blooms. We returned to find the geraniums with wilted leaves. The flowers that had survived were dull and their centre petals had shrivelled to a deep burgundy instead of being bright red. I was afraid that we might lose the plants completely. So I watered them and pruned away dead leaves and old blooms. Within a week, they were revived and blooming again.

Eight years before, after extensive surgery and six months of chemo and radiation therapy, I had felt like those geraniums. With a scarred body and spirit I was wilted and dulled, emotionally and physically. But I was kept alive by skilled surgeons, effective drugs, prayer and the care of hospital staff, family and friends.

Cancer-free now, I have a greater appreciation for each day and greater gratitude for the most important people and essential things in life. Because of those stressful and frightening experiences, I am ready to serve God more fully. Like the revived and flourishing geraniums, I have been able to put forth new blossoms of service and creativity.

Prayer: *Thank you, Lord, for your faithful presence through difficult times. Amen*

Thought for the day: Though I am weak, God is strong.

John R. Robinson (Ohio, US)

Boring faith?

Read 2 Timothy 3:14–17

Train children in the way they should go; when they grow old, they won't depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6 (CEB)

When I was a child, my father was adamant about regular family Bible study and prayer time. I just wanted to play outside, watch television or read mystery novels. One morning, the school bus driver arrived early and waited outside where, much to my embarrassment, our family of four was in full view through the living room window as we knelt in prayer. When we ran out to get on the bus, our friends asked my sister and me why we were all lined up in a row with our heads down. Afraid of being laughed at, we answered that we were helping our parents put a new cover on the living room sofa.

In my teenage years I would arrive home from my school activities to find my father sitting at his desk with a well-worn and marked-up Bible open before him. I would sigh and think that Dad was at it again. What a boring way to spend an evening!

Now with a family of my own, I think differently of my father's example as I delve into his old, tattered Bible. The inheritance of faith and Bible study my father left me gives me a sense of security that money can't buy, and I thank both of my parents for that legacy.

Prayer: *Dear Father, thank you for the spiritual leaders in our families and communities. Help us to pass on our faith to younger generations. Amen*

Thought for the day: How can I be a spiritual leader in my household?

Wilma R. Vernich (Tennessee, US)

Plodding along

Read Isaiah 40:25–31

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

In today's reading, I expect Isaiah to put the verbs in the order of walk, run, soar – to end his poem on a high point. However, Isaiah starts with soaring eagles and ends with the feebler verb, walk. Why does Isaiah start with the grand and end with the ordinary?

As I think about how I face challenges in my life, however, I take comfort in this reversed order. When I return from a spiritual retreat, I feel as if I can take on the world. I can meet challenges head-on and win. I am soaring like an eagle! Inevitably, though, life beats me down. I stop soaring, but I am still running. As I run, more obstacles slow my pace, and I am soon down to a walk. What does Isaiah mean by, 'they will walk and not be faint'? I think he means plodding along, taking challenges in my stride and facing the painful, the fatiguing and the boring without giving up.

Life is not always about soaring. Often, it's simply finding the strength to put one foot in front of the other when we'd rather not. We can look again at Isaiah's 'backward' sentence and take comfort!

Prayer: *Faithful God, help us to watch for others who need our encouragement. Amen*

Thought for the day: God will walk with me through life's highs and lows.

Tom Smith (Utah, US)

Unforeseen blessings

Read Lamentations 3:22–24

Certainly the faithful love of the Lord hasn't ended; certainly God's compassion isn't through!

Lamentations 3:22 (CEB)

At the end of a dry winter, we finally received about an inch and a half of rain. It was amazing how much fresher the garden looked. Everything was greener and stood taller. A few days later, I noticed dozens of small lettuce seedlings poking up between the brick paving which forms the garden path among our vegetable beds. Because the bricks had absorbed so much moisture from the rain, they were damp enough to encourage the growth of tiny self-sown lettuce seeds in a way which the soil struggled to do. Because of the dry year, I hadn't expected the lettuces to survive. But here they were, creating an amazing example of God's surprising abundance.

God's gifts don't always come neatly packaged, growing in tidy rows or in the 'right' places. From my experience of God's gifts in unforeseen and totally unexpected places, I have seen that he can always surprise and delight us.

Prayer: *Loving Father, thank you for surprising and delighting us with your bounty, just when we need it most. Amen*

Thought for the day: God has surprises in store for me each day.

Meg Mangan (New South Wales, Australia)

Heading heavenward

Read Genesis 12:1–10

[Abraham] looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Hebrews 11:10 (KJV)

At God's call, Abraham and Sarah (then Abram and Sarai) left Ur, the city of their family. God had promised to make of Abraham a great nation, through which all the earth would be blessed. How Abraham must have questioned this as the years passed and Sarah remained barren! Yet when they both reached a very old age, Isaac was born to them – truly God's miracle and the beginning of God's people, the Israelites (see Genesis 21:2–5.) Through Abraham and Sarah, many generations later, would come the Saviour of the world (see Matthew 1:1–16.)

Two years ago when our family, consisting of our teenage grandson, our daughter, son-in-law, their infant son, my husband, myself, two cats and a turtle, bounced along the motorway in our two vehicles, I thought of Abraham's courage. Like Abraham, we were leaving a comfortable home for an unknown, far-away ministry with our eldest daughter and her family. Abraham trusted the Lord through the difficulties and uncertainties. We can look to Abraham's example of faith to propel us forward over the bumps of this challenging earthly life.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us look to you when we face uncertainties. Remind us that no matter where we move, our eternal home is with you. Amen

Thought for the day: Day by day, through joy and tears, I will follow God.

Cynthia Losness (Michigan, US)

Mother's legacy

Read Psalm 146:1–10

I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

Psalm 146:2 (NIV)

'Betty, you are my favourite patient!' the young doctor greeted my 90-year-old mother when my sister and I accompanied her to a regular check-up. Mum has been dealing with dementia for many years. The doctor asked her detailed questions to gauge her mental capacity. She had difficulty answering trivial questions, so the doctor asked, 'Betty, can you write a sentence or two?'

Without hesitation, Mum quickly wrote on a piece of paper, folded it, and handed it to the doctor. The doctor read aloud, 'Jesus said... "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"' (John 14:6, NRSV).

'Doctor, you can believe it!' Mum said, her face glowing. The doctor smiled as he completed his notes.

After the appointment, we took Mum back to her sheltered housing complex, where she is cherished by the staff and other residents as she shares God's love through her joyful spirit. We will never forget how Mum ended her prayer with us that day: 'Jesus, I hope you have a wonderful day!'

Despite her illness, Mum continues to be an example of God's faithfulness, inspiring us as she leaves her spiritual legacy. Her prayer reminded us that we can always talk to Jesus as a friend.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for your faithfulness, and thank you for being a friend to us. Amen

Thought for the day: Jesus is my Saviour and my friend.

Susan Bates (Oregon, US)

A rich harvest

Read Matthew 13:1–23

The seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

Matthew 13:23 (NIV)

One of our church members invited us to her farm to have a go at growing food. We got up early one day to plant taros, a type of root vegetable. Several weeks later, we were invited back to check each taro we had planted and remove weeds around it to help it grow healthily and to obtain a rich harvest. We found that every young taro looked bigger than before, which made us happy. However, when we looked carefully, we saw that almost every taro had been surrounded by weeds; some of the weeds had even grown bigger than the taros. We started to pull out the weeds from around the taros. One of my church members advised me as she watched my work, ‘Just picking the weeds is not enough. You have to pull out the roots!’

This experience made me think about our spiritual growth as Christians. We can cultivate spiritual fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. To make this possible, we must completely remove all the weeds – including the roots – that hinder our spiritual growth.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to remove what is unnecessary in our lives in order to be what you want us to be. Amen

Thought for the day: What ‘weeds’ are hindering my spiritual growth?

Kazuo Ishikawa (Akita, Japan)

Subscriptions

The Upper Room is published in January, May and September.

Individual subscriptions

The subscription rate for orders for 4 or fewer copies includes postage and packing:

The Upper Room annual individual subscription £16.95

Group subscriptions

Orders for 5 copies or more, sent to ONE address, are post free:

The Upper Room annual group subscription £13.50

Please do not send payment with order for a group subscription. We will send an invoice with your first order.

Please note that the annual billing period for group subscriptions runs from 1 May to 30 April.

Copies of the notes may also be obtained from Christian bookshops.

Single copies of *The Upper Room* cost £4.50.

Prices valid until 30 April 2019.

Giant print version

The Upper Room is available in giant print for the visually impaired, from:

Torch Trust for the Blind

Torch House

Torch Way

Northampton Road

Market Harborough

LE16 9HL

Tel: +44 (0)1858 438260
torchtrust.org



Transforming lives and communities

Christian growth and understanding of the Bible

Resourcing individuals, groups and leaders in churches for their own spiritual journey and for their ministry

Church outreach in the local community

Offering three programmes that churches are embracing to great effect as they seek to engage with their local communities and transform lives



Teaching Christianity in primary schools

Working with children and teachers to explore Christianity creatively and confidently

Children's and family ministry

Working with churches and families to explore Christianity creatively and bring the Bible alive

Visit brf.org.uk for more information on BRF's work

brf.org.uk

The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) is a Registered Charity (No. 233280)

THE UPPER ROOM is a unique publication which 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 the insights of their faith with others.

'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.'

This edition of *The Upper Room* is published by The Bible Reading Fellowship, which works to see lives and communities transformed through its creative programmes and resources for individuals, churches and schools.

The Upper Room is also available in giant print for the visually impaired.
For more information, see page 156.

UK £4.50

978-0-85746-606-8



9 780857 466068

Cover image by Rebecca J Hall

The Bible Reading Fellowship is a Registered Charity (233280)



brf.org.uk

