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THE UPPER ROOM

May–August 2026

WHERE THE WORLD MEETS TO PRAY

Daily Bible meditations
from Christians around the world

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Daniele Och
UK editor

INVITATIONAL
INTERDENOMINATIONAL
INTERNATIONAL

32 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 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**

Focusing on what matters

As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.
Colossians 3:12 (NIV)

I don't know about you, but as the years pass and technology speeds up and change seems to be the only constant, I sometimes have trouble determining where to focus my time and energy. When the daily news floods our consciousness with fearful images of natural disasters, war, and hunger, how do we focus on what really matters?

Colossians 3 offers guidance on how followers of Christ should focus their attention. Setting our 'minds on things above' means prioritising 'compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience' and forgiving one another (vv. 2, 12). In this issue, writers share their own experiences of maintaining focus on what matters: nurturing God's gift of friendship, persevering in prayer even when hope wanes, finding ways to ask for and accept help, and paying close attention to how God is working in the world.

There is so much to care about and for in this world, and all of it feels weighty and worthy of our time and attention. But we each have a finite amount of time and energy to offer. Thankfully we belong to the one body of Christ, and each of us has unique gifts and abilities to offer the world. Focusing 'on things above' might just mean finding where our gifts match the needs around us and pouring our time and energy into compassion, kindness, and patience in that place, trusting our fellow members of the body to care for what we cannot. Where is God leading you to focus your attention and energy? What practices will allow you to follow God's call and keep your focus 'on things above'?

Lindsay Gray
Editorial director, The Upper Room

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

Kenya: Pasquelina Kunyanga, Sammy M.
Nigeria: Vanessa Ekhaese, Sandra O., Chiazo Obiudu, Dickson Okorafor
Zambia: Mary-Chilufya Bwalya

Africa-English edition

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The editor writes…

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.
2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV)

If you read a print copy of the Bible, rather than one on your phone, have you ever paid much attention to the supplementary pages provided with most modern editions? These are the pages, usually at the front and back of the book, that provide extra information to help the reader in how to approach the Bible and make sense of it – things like maps, timelines, and suggested reading plans.

The sort of information included in these pages varies considerably among different editions, but there are two tools that seem to be ubiquitous (at least based on the Bibles on my bookshelf). One is a table of weights and measures, which converts the ancient units of measurement mentioned in the Bible into modern metric. The other is a kind of index of sample scripture passages that speak to a life issue or emotion. In the copy of the Bible I am currently using, this type of index is entitled 'Help and guidance' and its entries include 'Afraid', 'Bereaved', 'Doubting', 'Ill or in pain', 'Thankful', and 'Worried'.

For me, these two tools together provide a great illustration of the nature of the Bible. On the one hand, it is an ancient text from cultures very different from our own, which measured things in cubits, omers, and baths. On the other hand, Christians believe the Bible also speaks the word of God across all times and places, and thus it still speaks to us today as we face the joys and sorrows that are part of universal human experience.

This aspect of the Bible is reflected in each issue of *The Upper Room*, and this one is no exception. The meditations that follow come from different cultures around the world. Yet across them all, the writers share how they have faced situations and emotions that we all do – fear, bereavement, doubt, illness, and worry, but also love, joy, wonder, and hope – and how God has been with them as they did so. So, whatever you may be experiencing at present, as you read this issue of *The Upper Room* together with the Bible, I hope you will also find 'help and guidance' in the following pages.

Daniele Och
UK editor

Green shoots

Read Isaiah 43:14–21

'Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.'
Isaiah 43:18–19 (NIV)

My husband and I love to hike in the woods. With the fresh air, tall trees, wildflowers and singing birds, a day spent in nature never fails to lift our spirits. So it was unsettling to set out on a hike and find the bleak remains of a forest fire instead. Blackened sticks and stumps littered the ground, and the faint smell of smoke lingered in the air.

As I looked closer, however, I noticed something else. Tiny green shoots poked up through the dirt; a few mountain laurels bloomed on blackened branches. New growth was emerging from the ashes, but I had to look for it.

Focusing on the green shoots in life does not come naturally to me. I tend to ruminate on the past, replaying awkward conversations, missed opportunities and questionable life choices in an endless loop. But God does not want us to be consumed by 'what ifs' and regrets. In this passage from Isaiah, God encourages us to forget the former things that may prevent us from seeing the good that lies ahead.

If we look for the green shoots we will find the hope and strength to keep moving forward, confident that God is laying a path towards a positive future.

Prayer: *Gracious God, you go before us and are always with us. Thank you for reminding us to keep our eyes focused on the positive future you have in store for us. Amen.*

Thought for the day: I will look for the good things God is preparing for me today.

Laura Newbury (Virginia, USA)

Beat the train

Read Matthew 6:25–34

Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.
Matthew 6:34 (NRSV)

Recently during my drive to work, I reached a railroad crossing as the red warning lights began to flash, announcing that a train was approaching. The two cars ahead of me sped up to beat the train before the crossing gates came down. I'll admit I was tempted to try to beat the train too, but I decided not to. The train that came had only two cars, however, and the whole event was over in less than a minute. I caught up with the cars that had 'beaten the train' at the next stoplight.

I wonder why we are in such a hurry all the time, even to the point of risking life and limb to save a few minutes. Granted, I have seen trains that stop traffic for half an hour or longer, so I can understand the desire to try to beat the train. But at what cost?

Jesus says, 'Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.' Worrying will not prolong our lives; being patient just might. Our obligations will still be there when the train has passed. We can be patient and enjoy each moment.

Prayer: *Gracious God, help us to be patient. Guide us to focus on your Spirit in times of hurry and find peace in you. Amen.*

Thought for the day: I will take time to enjoy each day God gives me.

John Alan Cox (Michigan, USA)

Yet we prayed

Read Habakkuk 3:16–19

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.
Habakkuk 3:18 (NIV)

In her first week of life my daughter had seizures, but the doctors could not find a cause. My husband and I were filled with anxiety as we contemplated her uncertain future. One day we both wept and prayed, 'Lord Jesus, she is your child. We know you love her more than we possibly can. We will accept whatever outcome you decide.' My husband and I were terrified that our child would have a poor outcome. And yet we prayed and relinquished her to God's care, knowing that, whatever the outcome, God would be with us.

Habakkuk was a prophet at a difficult period in Jewish history. The king was wicked, and the people worshipped false gods. They were facing an economic crisis and attacks by Babylonian soldiers. Habakkuk was in despair, yet he prayed, proclaiming that God was in control. Even if the crops failed and livestock died, he would rejoice in God's strength and salvation. In the end, Habakkuk was convinced that he could trust God's care, no matter how bleak the circumstances appeared.

My family also faced difficult and confusing circumstances following our daughter's birth. And yet, like Habakkuk, we prayed a prayer of humble submission, trusting our daughter to God. Ultimately our daughter recovered with medication. Thanks be to God!

Prayer: *Dear Lord, we accept whatever challenges arise because we know that your strength is with us. Amen.*

Thought for the day: I can rejoice even in bad circumstances because God is with me.

Carol Peter (Gujarat, India)

Sewn together

Read Ephesians 4:29–32

Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)

When I begin a new sewing project, I choose fabric from my fairly large stash of remnants that vary in size and shape. I take into consideration the patterns, colours, and fabric thickness when deciding what to use. Once I've chosen the fabric, I start measuring, cutting, ironing, and sewing the pieces together, ensuring that each piece meshes well with the next one so that the end result is strong and cohesive.

Much like a sewing project joins various fabrics, Christian community brings diverse people together. Just as fabrics have their own unique characteristics, every person is distinctive. Our life experiences also shape us and help us to connect with others. Times of grief, uncertainty, or even joy can help us to become more compassionate towards others.

When we support one another, our lives are woven together, forming a strong unit. The strength and confidence we find in community help us to care for each other and show the love of Christ.

Prayer: *Dear God, fill us with your love so that we may show compassion to others. Guide our words and actions as we seek to help those around us. Join us together in forgiveness, love, and support for one another. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

Thought for the day: I share God's love when I care for and support others.

Dina Klotz (Tennessee, USA)

Stop to give thanks

Read Luke 17:11–19

He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan.

Luke 17:16 (NRSV)

On a recent trip, I noticed that instead of being thankful, I was complaining. The bed was hard (but it was clean); the air conditioner was loud (but it worked well); the hotel breakfast was skimpy (but someone prepared it for me). I asked God to forgive my ungrateful attitude and recalled the many times Jesus gave thanks. He thanked God for the five loaves and two fish before they were multiplied. He thanked God for hearing his prayers before Lazarus was raised from the dead. Even on the night he was betrayed, Jesus gave thanks. As I asked for forgiveness, God showed me that gratitude was not what God was asking me to *feel*; rather giving thanks was what God wanted me to *do*.

The Samaritan man in today's verse was one of ten people who came to Jesus to be healed of leprosy. All of them looked to God for help. All of them prayed. All of them obeyed Jesus' instructions, and all were joyful when they were healed. But only the Samaritan stopped and returned to give thanks.

To learn gratitude, we don't need to work up a grateful feeling. Rather, we simply need to stop complaining, return to Jesus, and give him thanks!

Prayer: *O Lord, when we complain, remind us to give thanks instead. Amen.*

Thought for the day: Giving thanks, even when I don't feel grateful, teaches me gratitude.

Peter Caligiuri (Florida, USA)

Strength is overrated

Read 2 Corinthians 12:1–10

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
Psalm 46:1 (NRSV)

It's often flattering to be called strong, but I am learning that human strength is overrated. I wanted to be strong for my dad and our family as I helplessly watched my dad's health deteriorate due to sepsis-induced multiple organ failure. So I tried to ignore the hurt I felt. Even after he died less than three weeks later, I kept trying to be strong. The effort nearly broke me. I was exhausted and drained physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

I'm learning it's okay to be tired, frustrated, or overwhelmed. And we can admit it to those close to us – especially to our heavenly Father. We don't need to pretend with God, to act strong or seem like we've got it all together. God's strength is made perfect in our weakness.

Christ cried to God before facing crucifixion, so why should we try to face challenges, heartbreak, or loss without crying to God for help? God is our ever-present help in trouble, and God invites us to draw near in times of need. We can be vulnerable with God, who is not embarrassed by our tears or put off by our weakness. Rather, God takes us in, comforts us, and gives us strength.

Prayer: *Ever-present God, may we, with the help of the Holy Spirit, always remember that even when we feel weak, you are with us in our times of need. Amen.*

Thought for the day: When I feel helpless and vulnerable, God is my strength.

Chiazo Obiudu (Ebonyi State, Nigeria)

A persistent faith

Read Hebrews 12:1–2

The goal I pursue is the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 3:14 (CEB)

Many years ago, I decided that I wanted to learn guitar, and I wanted to be able to play it well. I bought an inexpensive guitar at first. After learning some chords, I could play a few songs. I thought that if I bought a really nice guitar it would enhance my playing, so I asked a friend of mine, who is an excellent guitarist, to pick one out for me. He selected one that sounded the best to him. That was 35 years ago. I can still play, but I'm average at best. I failed to take into consideration the many hours of practice needed to become the guitarist I aspired to be.

Like learning the guitar, embarking on a spiritual journey is filled with both excitement and uncertainty. You start with basic chords and simple melodies as a beginner guitar player, and you start with the fundamentals of faith as a new believer. Musicians play more complex pieces as their skills develop. Likewise, as we grow in faith, we take on more challenging spiritual questions. And just like playing an instrument, growing in faith requires commitment, practice, and time.

In both endeavours, there will be times of frustration – when your fingers fumble or your faith is tested. Like with so many other things, the beauty lies not just in the end result but in the journey itself. And each step we take in faith moves us along a much greater path.

Prayer: *Gracious God, may we always put you first in our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Thought for the day: I will live out my faith one day at a time and enjoy the journey.

Vic H. (Alabama, USA)

A sea without a shore

Read Philippians 1:19–26

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.
Philippians 1:21 (NIV)

I once asked the chaplain of our local hospice if he ever gets depressed being with so many people daily who are facing death. 'Not at all,' he replied. 'Some of them are really excited to be going to a place where they will meet Jesus.' This reminded me of what the apostle Paul wrote: 'For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain… Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!' (Philippians 1:21–22).

The apostle Paul had seen the risen Lord Jesus and had a vision of the heavenly realms, but for many of us, what it will be like to meet Jesus remains a mystery. In another letter, Paul speaks of God as living in 'unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see' (1 Timothy 6:16). This is where the language of poetry can be so helpful.

I was struck recently by the words of the hymn 'How shall I sing that majesty', especially the final lines: '*Thou art a sea without a shore, a sun without a sphere; thy time is now and evermore, thy place is everywhere.*' As well as finding the verse so beautiful and deeply inspirational, I was astonished that these words were written more than 300 years ago.

The world has changed a lot in that time, and I am grateful for advances in science and technology that have helped us live longer. Yet when it comes to expressing truths that are beyond our knowledge, I am also grateful for words of faith that have endured throughout the centuries.

Prayer: *Thank you, Lord, for the believers of long ago whose faith can inspire us today, until the day you call us home. Amen.*

Thought for the day: 'If you really know me, you will know my Father as well' (John 14:7).

Patricia Rantisi (England, United Kingdom)

Restored

Read Ecclesiastes 3:9–15

Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty.
Revelation 15:3 (NIV)

When tectonic plates move against each other, causing stress to build up in the Earth's crust until the rock breaks, the resulting fracture is called a fault. This happened at the point where the countries of Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina converge. At this point, with erosion and the passing of time, the famous and beautiful Iguazú Falls was formed.

It seems contradictory to say that a natural marvel could be the result of a fault. In our relationship with God, something similar occurs. We may break away from God, fracture, or lose our way. But in this fractured state, God creates great and marvellous wonders. Through Christ, we recover the purpose for which we were created. Through Christ's mercy we are restored. This is possible when God steps in, freeing us from the chaos we find ourselves in to offer new life with peace and purpose.

Prayer: *Creator God, out of the chaos you restored us with your sustaining love. All glory and thanks to you. As Jesus taught us we pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one' (Matthew 6:9–13). Amen.*

Thought for the day: God's love and mercy can restore my brokenness.

Luis Alarcón (Misiones, Argentina)

Mat carriers

Read Luke 5:17–26

Just then some men came carrying a paralysed man on a stretcher. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus.
Luke 5:18 (NIV)

A number of years ago at a training weekend, the lecturer led us through a guided imagination exercise about the story from Luke's gospel of the paralysed man being lowered through the roof in front of Jesus. The lecturer asked us to visualise ourselves as the person on the mat and what it would have been like to encounter the Lord. It was a very powerful exercise.

We were then encouraged to see if there were four people we could ask to be 'mat carriers' for us. These were to be people that we could trust and who would commit to 'carry us to the Lord' in prayer. I reflected on this and contacted four friends.

Knowing that I was being taken to the Lord in prayer regularly was deeply encouraging. Sometimes I would be specific in my prayer requests, and sometimes I would say nothing and know that still I was being prayed for. I could send an 'SOS' message to them at anytime, if I had an emergency need for prayer.

It was so comforting to know, especially when I found it hard to pray myself, that these four friends were literally taking me into Jesus' presence. My friendships were also strengthened, and now, almost two decades later, three of these 'mat carriers' are still among my closest friends, with reciprocated prayer as a bond.

Prayer: *Thank you, Lord, for friends that pray for us and with us. Bless them today. Amen.*

Thought for the day: Who could I ask to be prayer 'mat carriers' for me today?

Caroline Mansell (England, United Kingdom)

Holy community

Read Revelation 22:16–17

The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let the one who hears say, 'Come!' Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

Revelation 22:17 (NIV)

Driving in an older section of our town, we passed by an historic, majestic church building. A sign out the front announced its closure and gratitude for the 110-plus years of its service to the community. I felt an overwhelming sadness as I imagined all the weddings, baptisms, and other celebrations that would no longer be held there. I also thought of the sombre occasions – the funerals, the broken families seeking refuge. I imagined the people of that church praying with and for each other, sharing in their joy and grief.

Today, worship takes many forms. For some it is an online event. Others feel that the Lord doesn't require four walls or a church community to worship God. There is truth to that. We can worship anywhere and anytime.

But for me, church is the place where I experience God with other believers, and being part of that has been a dynamic experience. There is something special about people of different ages and backgrounds joining together as a church family to worship God. Together we reach into our community and around the world to promote God's word and to support and help each other. What a joyous feeling it is to join with others in a shared love for God!

Prayer: *Dear Lord, we worship you and offer all praise and glory in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Thought for the day: I find holy community when I worship God with others.

Mary Ellen Hazen (Ohio, USA)

From hopeless to amazed

Read Psalm 30

'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

I clutched my exam results in trembling hands as tears streamed down my face. I was the top-scoring student in my school, but instead of feeling joy I was overcome with despair. As a girl from a poor family, I knew that no matter how good my marks were, there was no hope of paying for high school. 'God,' I whispered through my tears, 'I wish these marks belonged to someone whose family could afford to make their dreams come true.'

Though it felt like an unreachable dream, I secured an interview at the local Catholic girls' school. I passed, but we didn't have enough money for school supplies or the fees to get me through the gate. Refusing to give up, my father suggested we go to the school anyway and ask for more time to pay the fees. We arrived at the principal's office, burdened with worry but carrying a sliver of hope.

To our amazement, the principal admitted me on the spot – without fees. That day marked the beginning of a miracle. I completed my studies, and today I am a tutor at a teacher training college. Looking back, I see how God's plans were greater than my doubts. Even when I thought my future was lost, God prepared a path to prosper me, turning despair into hope.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, we give thanks that your plans are always greater than our fears. Help us trust you even when the road ahead seems impossible. Amen.*

Thought for the day: God's plans transform tears of despair into songs of hope.

Pasquelina Kunyanga (Nairobi, Kenya)

In-between days

Read John 15:1–8

'If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.'
John 15:5 (NIV)

A song that has been meaningful to me gives the assurance that God is with us both on the mountain and in the valley. Over years of growing closer to Christ, I have felt God's presence with me on the mountains and in the valleys – on my best days and my worst.

But after evaluating my relationship with God, I have realised that the ordinary days between the mountains and valleys are the ones where I fail to feel God's presence. The days that I fill with meetings, conference calls, and never-ending emails are the ones when I drift from God. I allow myself to be distracted and to think I can do life without God.

Jesus told his disciples, 'If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.' We need to be connected to Christ every day if we want to bear fruit.

When we allow ourselves to be distracted on our in-between days, we unconsciously allow ourselves to drift. We must, with great intentionality, remain in Christ all our days.

Prayer: *Loving God, help us to abide in you always, including on the days when the world distracts us most. Amen.*

Thought for the day: I will intentionally turn to God on the ordinary days.

Jonathan Porter (Georgia, USA)

Turning towards God

Read Psalm 105:1–7

Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.
1 Chronicles 16:11 (NIV)

While visiting a sunflower field, I was fascinated by the way the flowers turn their faces to follow the sun as it crosses the sky. Scientists attribute this behaviour to the circadian rhythm, an internal biological timekeeper that regulates their actions. This circadian clock helps sunflowers open their blooms at dawn for pollinating insects and optimises their light absorption for photosynthesis.

As I reflected on this fact, I realised that as I turn my face to the living God, I receive God's light and my spirit is filled with strength and courage to face the challenges of this world. When I fix my gaze on God, I give God well-deserved priority and attention. I have learned that God never hides from us. God invites us to draw close through Bible reading, prayer, worship, and helping others. God knows our needs and provides for them. Proverbs 8:17 says: 'I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.'

Turning our faces to God brings us to a place of deep intimacy and allows us to experience the relationship God desires to have with us. God blesses us abundantly as we seek God's face.

Prayer: *Faithful God, help us always to keep our eyes on you. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Thought for the day: I will always seek God's face.

Everludis Aldarondo-López (Virginia, USA)

Finding purpose

Read Proverbs 16:1–7

Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.
Proverbs 16:3 (NIV)

A few years ago, I felt lost in my career. The daily tasks were monotonous, and I began questioning whether my work had any true purpose. Despite my best efforts to stay positive, I struggled to find meaning in what I was doing.

One evening, during a moment of prayer, I came across Proverbs 16:3. It was a gentle reminder to surrender my work to God and trust God to guide me. Instead of focusing solely on promotions or achievements, I started praying each morning for my actions to serve God's purposes.

As I shifted my perspective, I began to notice small opportunities to serve others at work – helping a colleague with a project, listening to a co-worker share their struggles, or simply offering words of encouragement. These seemingly minor acts gave me a renewed sense of purpose. My work was no longer just about accomplishing tasks but about reflecting God's love to those around me.

When we feel uncertain about our purpose, we can commit our work to God. We can ask God to reveal meaning even in mundane or challenging moments. When we trust that God is working through us, we can be assured that no task is too small to honour the Lord.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, when we feel lost in our daily routines, help us to trust your guidance and find purpose in serving you. Amen.*

Thought for the day: God can bring purpose to even the most uncertain seasons of life.

Peter Q. (Singapore)

A bag with holes

Read Haggai 1:3–6

[You] earn wages to put them into a bag with holes.
Haggai 1:6 (NRSV)

I still have my grandfather's cloth seed bag that he used to store seed corn. It has a neat patch, lovingly stitched by my grandmother. My grandparents were hardworking and knew that lost grain meant less money from selling the crop or less cornbread for a meal. They would have understood the prophet Haggai when he mentioned a 'bag with holes'.

Haggai spoke of lost blessings, however, not lost seeds. He urged the Israelites to follow God's laws and enjoy God's blessings. Instead, they disobeyed. Their spiritual life resembled a bag with holes. The former captives had returned from Babylon and built fine houses for themselves. The temple, however, remained unfinished. Disobedience ruined their lives.

I think of my grandparents and Haggai as I consider my own ways. If I neglect God's word, I am unprepared to face serious challenges. When my spiritual bag contains holes, I lose blessings. Grandmother used a needle and thread to patch grandfather's seed bag. For my spiritual holes, I need more Bible study, prayer, confession, Christian fellowship, and service. With God's help, we can repair the holes in our spiritual bags so that they will overflow with God's abundant blessings.

Prayer: *Help us, God, to be diligent in studying and praying as we seek your will. Remind us that you take pleasure in our obedience. Amen.*

Thought for the day: God's blessings are the best gifts I will ever receive.

Roberta Jones (Kentucky, USA)

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