

THE UPPER ROOM

September–December 2026

WHERE THE WORLD
MEETS TO PRAY



Daily Bible meditations
from Christians around the world

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WHERE THE WORLD MEETS TO PRAY

Daniele Och

UK editor

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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.

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Give but also receive

[Jesus] instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a walking stick — no bread, no bags, and no money in their belts.

Mark 6:8 (CEB)

The New Testament is full of instructions about giving to others, such as: ‘God loves a cheerful giver’ (2 Corinthians 9:7); ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’ (Acts 20:35); ‘Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor’ (Mark 10:21). These familiar verses and others rightly hold up giving as a virtuous, generous, and necessary act for all those who follow Christ. Giving generously is essential to the building of God’s kingdom.

But I think we sometimes overlook the importance of receiving when we focus on this call to give cheerfully. After all, in order to give there must be someone to give to – someone to receive what is offered and make use of it. The relationship forged when we give and receive is the essence of biblical hospitality. When Jesus sends the disciples out in pairs, he instructs them to take nothing with them. In doing so, they must rely on the hospitality of others, recognising what their hosts have to offer them even as the disciples bring healing powers and good news of Jesus’ teachings to their hosts.

In this issue of *The Upper Room*, writers describe some of the many ways we receive comfort, guidance, and clarity from God. In order to give of ourselves and share our talents with those around us, we must first receive from God, the giver of all good gifts. In the weeks to come, I pray that each of us will open ourselves to the gifts God is offering us and in turn that we will give generously to everyone we encounter.

Lindsay Gray

Editorial director, The Upper Room

Where the world meets to pray

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

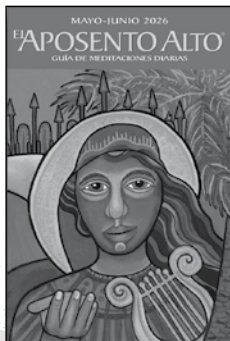
Argentina: Laura Lis Abad, Analía Rearte

Colombia: Iván Esteban Arce Ibarra,
Livys Lora Caro

Costa Rica: Priscilla E. Cháves

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Mexico: Norma Maldonado



Spanish edition

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The editor writes...

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

Luke 2:7 (NRSV)

One of my other roles at BRF Ministries is to edit some of the books and other resources we publish. Recently, I was editing our Advent book for 2026, *Treasures in Straw* by Tanya Marlow, when something she wrote caught my eye and which, as editor of *The Upper Room*, I found especially illuminating.

The Upper Room gets its name from when one of its founders, Grover Emmons, was inspired by a sermon about how the power of God descended on the disciples as they prayed in an upper room. The preacher of that sermon was presumably referring to Pentecost, although Acts 2 does not specifically mention that the disciples were in an ‘upper room’. The phrase ‘upper room’ is used, however, to describe the room in which Jesus celebrates the last supper with the disciples: ‘And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready’ (Luke 22:12, KJV).

So what has that to do with Tanya Marlow’s Advent book? Well, in his instructions to his disciples, Jesus also uses another word to refer to where he wants to celebrate his last supper: ‘Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ (Luke 22:11). That phrase, ‘guest room’, is, I learned from Tanya, a translation of the Greek word *kataluma*. And that word *kataluma*, she says, is the same word used to describe the place of the nativity: ‘She... laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room’ (Luke 2:7).

I knew that the title *The Upper Room* had resonances with Pentecost and with Easter. But it was news to me that there is also a connection (even if only a semantic one) with the third of the three main Christian festivals – Christmas!

So, there you have it: you now have a reason to reflect upon the events connected with the ‘upper room’ throughout the Christian year – at Easter, at Pentecost, and at Christmas. And with it coincidentally publishing three times a year, you have *The Upper Room* to help you do so!

Daniele Och
UK editor

A gracious receiver

Read 1 Kings 17:7-16

'Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.'

Luke 6:38 (NIV)

Although my mother worked full-time and we had few material possessions as a family, she was always generous with her time and helped those in need – without expecting to be repaid for her kindness. As gracious as she was at giving, she was not always gracious at receiving. I suspect that her pride may have gotten in the way at times.

While giving graciously is important, it is also important to receive graciously. Without willing recipients, we are limited in how we can share the time and gifts with which God has blessed us. I learned this lesson firsthand when I visited a church and a woman there offered me a centrepiece with a candle in it. I started to refuse because I already had so many objects like this at home. However, another woman whispered to me, 'You may not need the gift, but she needs to honour you with it. Accept it for her sake.'

That important lesson taught me that in order for people to give there must be recipients who are willing to accept. If we deny another person the opportunity to share what they have, we also deny that person the blessings that come from giving. In both giving and receiving, let's strive to be gracious.

Prayer: *Loving God, help us to be gracious givers and receivers. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.*

Thought for the day: I bless others when I receive their gifts graciously.

Mary Hunt Webb (New Mexico, USA)

The blessing of humility

Read Matthew 5:1–11

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’

Matthew 5:3 (NIV)

I had volunteered at a church event to distribute food and help clean up. Initially this felt like an insignificant job, and I was reluctant. My friends were on stage leading worship, hosting, and preaching, while I was cleaning up in the back. I began to feel left out. However, I gradually realised that this simple task had meaning. Through serving, I connected with people and saw those in need of help, and I found a sense of fulfilment and peace.

In those moments, I realised that when Jesus spoke of the ‘poor in spirit’, he may have been talking about not being self-centred, focusing instead on God’s calling and love for others. Jesus said, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit’, because a humble heart allows us to rely more deeply on God, enabling us to experience the peace and blessings of the kingdom in any situation.

In daily life, we may encounter tasks that seem small and are often overlooked. However, when we embrace these with humility and give our best, we can experience God’s presence even in these small acts of service. True blessings are not born out of pride or self-interest but flow from a humble heart. God’s grace, like a spring, nourishes our lives and refreshes the hearts of others.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, grant us humble hearts so that we will lean on you and feel your peace and blessing. Amen.*

Thought for the day: Where can I serve others with a humble heart today?

Peter Q. (Singapore)

My portion

Read Proverbs 30:1–9

Don't give me either poverty or wealth; give me just the food I need.

Proverbs 30:8 (CEB)

I've always been a big girl and felt pressure internally and externally to be a small girl. I started my first diet at age 13. I exercised strenuously and severely limited my food intake. I quickly lost weight, but when I tried to return to normal eating habits, I started bingeing. Soon I regained all the weight I had lost plus more. So I started another strict diet. This pattern of dieting and bingeing became a way of life for me. I lost my ability to discern when I was truly hungry or when I was appropriately full. I had no idea how to eat moderately.

When I first read Proverbs 30:8, it spoke directly to me about my eating disorder. I prayed that God would help me find my portion – not too much and not too little. God helped me to see that my views about food, body image, and self-worth were skewed. God freed me from these and replaced them with reality and truth. I surrendered my image of the ideal body and began to find my genuine worth as a child of God.

As for eating, I followed the serving sizes listed on food packages. I stopped buying diet foods and focused on preparing healthy meals. With God's help and taking these practical steps, I slowly adjusted to moderate eating. Today, I am free from the cycle of dieting and bingeing. I am capable of moderate eating, and I've learned to love myself as I am.

Prayer: *Mighty God, free us from unhealthy ideals that diminish our self-worth. Help us to see ourselves as you see us. Amen.*

Thought for the day: My worth comes from my status as a child of God.

Mary J. Foust (Texas, USA)

Joy that remains

Read John 15:9–11

'I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.'

John 15:11 (NRSV)

Life's challenges can be overwhelming, but Jesus' joy is always available to us and does not depend on our circumstances. In John 15:11 Jesus said, 'I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.' This joy is a gift from Jesus, residing within us. As we navigate life's ups and downs, it's essential to remember that Jesus' joy is not something we must manufacture or find in external sources. It's a gift that's already within us, just waiting for us to tap into it.

Whatever we struggle with – whether it's anxiety, feeling overwhelmed by responsibilities, or facing a difficult decision – Jesus' joy is available to us. What would it look like to live with Jesus' joy in the midst of challenging circumstances? How will we cultivate this joy in daily life? What practical steps can we take to experience Jesus' joy more deeply? Even amid difficult circumstances, when we tap into Jesus' joy we can find peace.

Prayer: *Dear God, thank you for the gift of Jesus' joy that is always available to us. We pray as Jesus taught us: '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, forever. Amen' (Matthew 6:9–13, KJV).*

Thought for the day: May Jesus' joy be in me, and may my joy be complete today!

Motlatso Collin Rapetswa (Limpopo, South Africa)

The power of prayer

Read James 5:13-16

'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'

Isaiah 55:9 (NIV)

My friend and neighbour was in the hospital for what could have been a relatively simple procedure to improve the efficiency of his heart. However, if the procedure failed, he would need to have open heart surgery – something his weakened body might not be able to tolerate. My prayer was simple and repetitive: 'O Lord, please allow the simple procedure to be successful.' I am sure that many other prayers of a similar nature were uttered by his loved ones.

The doctors attempted the procedure three times, and it failed each time. But the next morning, the doctors were amazed to find that things had changed overnight. Despite everything they had observed the day before, the procedure had in fact been successful, and my friend was sent home. The doctors had no medical explanation. I recalled the words of Isaiah 55:9, which reminded me that God's healing power is not limited by the ways and thoughts of humans.

Not all prayers are answered in dramatic fashion, and not all are answered as we would like. However, all prayers are answered in accordance with God's will and timeline, and all prayers serve to draw us into closer communion with our Lord.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, may we pray without ceasing as we look to you for compassion, comfort, care, and courage. Amen.*

Thought for the day: Prayer is an opportunity to draw closer to the Lord.

Robert Boertien (Oregon, USA)

God's healing music

Read Psalm 30:4–12

*Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones,
and give thanks to his holy name.*

Psalm 30:4 (NRSV)

Worries raced inside my mind, and though I wanted to pray, I was unsure of what to say. I decided to search for music to relax my mind and help me meditate on God's healing love.

As I listened to various kinds of music over the next few days, I felt calmer. Classical instrumental pieces allowed me to breathe and wait on God, who is more powerful than the problems we endure. The traditional hymns I had heard as a child grounded me and reminded me of my hopes and dreams. Praise songs lifted my spirits and helped me feel closer to God. Listening to and reading lyrics about standing strong in faith, trusting in God, and being thankful for Jesus' sacrifice became a life-changing form of prayer for me. Music helped me to focus on God's promises and renew my relationship with God during a challenging time.

The psalms reveal the hope and comfort David found in writing songs and playing music, and even now – thousands of years later – music has the power to engage and transform people and connect us to our creator. I am grateful that God has given musicians and writers the gift to change lives through music by leading people to Christ.

Prayer: *Healing Father, thank you for the gift of music. Bless the musicians and lyricists who draw us closer to you. Amen.*

Thought for the day: Music can draw me closer to God.

Cindy Lee (England, United Kingdom)

God with us

Read Isaiah 49:13–18

‘Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’

Matthew 28:20 (NRSV)

My wife and I have retired to a home in the mountains that is surrounded by large rhododendron shrubs. In the spring, these shrubs are covered with colourful clusters of pink flowers. Their dark green leaves are evergreen throughout the year. But in the winter, particularly on frosty nights when the temperature drops below freezing, the leaves become even darker and collapse around the stems. They almost look as if they are drying up and dying. But as the day warms up, the leaves return to their robust shape, opening back up and regaining their original colour and appearance.

One winter day as my wife and I walked our dog, we witnessed this apparent return to life by the leaves of the rhododendrons. It reminded us that life can at times overwhelm and burden us – with illness, injury, debt, broken relationships, or other hardships. But God is always there to revive us, comfort us, and bring peace to our minds, souls, and spirits.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank you for your love and for being there for us in times of stress when life overwhelms us. Amen.*

Thought for the day: God is there for me no matter what I’m experiencing.

Don Germano (Georgia, USA)

Ready to be filled

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7–18

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

2 Corinthians 4:10 (NIV)

I like to collect empty jars that I put to good use. I fill some with liquid hand soap that I make myself. One jar stores my collection of buttons – if I need to sew a pair of eyes on to a stuffed elephant or hippo, I know just where to look! I crocheted a decorative covering for one of my biggest jars and turned it into a vase for flowers. The beauty of an empty jar is that it is empty and ready to be filled with something.

Sometimes we are like empty jars. When we experience difficulties, we feel like a shell, depleted from relying on our own powers and abilities. It may take a long time or a real crisis before we finally turn to God. We may wonder how God could possibly use us, but what can feel like empty space in our lives is simply room for our creator to work in and use for God's purpose. When we go to our heavenly Father in prayer, we can trust that we will be filled with his presence. Thankfully, God uses empty jars too!

Prayer: *Dear God, fill us with your presence and use us for your good purpose. Amen.*

Thought for the day: God has a good purpose for my life.

Carol Westerlund (Uusimaa, Finland)

When silence speaks

Read Psalm 46

[The Lord] says, 'Be still, and know that I am God.'

Psalm 46:10 (NIV)

The constant hum of my refrigerator had become such familiar background noise that I barely noticed it. But then during a power outage, the sudden silence felt deafening. As I sat in the darkness with a flashlight, I realised how much noise usually filled my life – electronics, traffic, and endless phone notifications.

In the unexpected quiet, I heard other things: my breathing, the gentle rustle of leaves outside, and – somehow more clearly than ever – God's presence. The verse, 'Be still, and know that I am God', took on new meaning. I had read this scripture countless times, but experiencing genuine stillness helped me understand it differently.

We often think of silence as emptiness or absence. But that night, I discovered that silence isn't empty – it's full of God's presence that is waiting to be noticed. Sometimes we need to quiet the noise of daily life to hear God's voice clearly.

The power came back on after a few hours, but that experience changed me. Now, I intentionally create quiet moments in my day. Sometimes it's just five minutes before sunrise or turning off my car radio during my commute. In these quiet spaces, I've found that God often speaks most clearly.

Prayer: *Dear God, help us find moments of stillness in our busy lives where we can experience your presence more deeply. Amen.*

Thought for the day: Silence is filled with God's presence.

David Scott Zepf (Missouri, USA)

For the future

Read Matthew 7:7–12

'Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.'

Matthew 7:7 (NRSV)

The church I attend recently celebrated the 120th anniversary of its founding. At the commemorative luncheon after the anniversary worship service, members gave speeches. Children spoke about their vision for the next generation.

One child spoke about praying for the future sanctuary. I realised that even children can understand that buildings decay, and I was deeply moved that these children were praying about their church building. I too began praying fervently that we can provide a church building for the next generation.

I became a Christian as an adult, so as a child I never thought of praying for the next generation. I was inspired to learn that Sunday school teachers were leading the children in this way.

It is vital for both children and adults to pray and then to take action together for these prayers to be realised. I am the administrator of an area shopping centre and want to use my work experience to help preserve the current church building for a long time. When adults take action and model good stewardship, we partner with the faithful efforts of others and the prayers of children to provide for the next faithful generation.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, help us to preserve and protect church buildings as places where children can find faith and live it out. Amen.*

Thought for the day: How is God calling me to support future generations?

Nozomi Matsunaga (Chiba Prefecture, Japan)

Take heart!

Read James 1:2-8

'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.'

John 16:33 (NIV)

The moment I sat down next to her, I sensed her anger. The entire bus journey was coloured by her unhappiness – at her bank closure, at the influence of social media on the young, at their behaviour in general, and at the cuts to local services. Her complaints were understandable, but I found myself being drawn into a downward spiral of despair. To shift the focus, I asked, 'So, has there been anything good about today?' Her attitude then changed, as she told me about the jewellery she had bought.

The early disciples faced many troubles, sometimes including persecution, imprisonment, and death. Yet in the face of such opposition, they heeded the Lord's teaching to 'Take heart!' James encourages us to 'Consider it joy' when we face trials 'of many kinds'. And Paul, when writing of his many sufferings, gave praise to 'the God of all comfort' (2 Corinthians 1:3). They found joy in knowing God to be with them, shaping and changing them and growing their faith. The hard times hadn't separated them from God. God hadn't abandoned them when bad or tough things happened.

When we find that the world has troubles and, like my fellow passenger on the bus, start to feel overwhelmed, may we too take heart and know that our God is with us and that, in Jesus, we may have peace.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, be near us, we pray. In our struggles may we have the certainty of your love. Amen.*

Thought for the day: I will always pray and not lose heart.

Hilary Allen (England, United Kingdom)

In every season

Read 1 Peter 5:5-7

*Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you;
he will never permit the righteous to be moved.*

Psalm 55:22 (NRSV)

After a series of personal and professional setbacks, I found myself questioning my path and wondering if I was doing enough to fulfil my purpose. Each day my confidence wavered, and I grew increasingly anxious about the future. It was during this challenging season that I turned to prayer, seeking clarity and comfort.

One morning while reading Proverbs, I came across the familiar verse, 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding' (Proverbs 3:5, NIV). These words seemed to leap off the page, speaking directly to my heart. I realised that I had been carrying my burdens alone, trying to navigate my struggles with my own strength. It was a gentle reminder to surrender my fears and to trust that God is guiding me, even if I can't see the full picture.

As I began to release my anxieties to God, I noticed a shift within me. Peace replaced my worry, and each day I felt lighter. Trusting God in that season taught me that in every moment, God is working behind the scenes in ways we may not understand.

Now, whenever life feels overwhelming, I return to this scripture. It reminds me that I don't have to carry my burdens alone. God is always by my side, providing strength and direction.

Prayer: *Loving God, thank you for guiding us in all things. Help us to trust you fully and find peace in your presence. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

Thought for the day: When I trust God, I am never alone in my challenges.

Kelvin L. Hicks (Texas, USA)



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‘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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