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# THE UPPER ROOM

## DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Sarah Wilke  
Publisher

Lynne M. Deming  
World Editor

INTERDENOMINATIONAL  
INTERNATIONAL  
INTERRACIAL

76 EDITIONS  
40 LANGUAGES

## **The Upper Room**

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Edited by Susan Hibbins

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## In Times of/For Help with . . .

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

- Anxiety: Sept 24; Oct 2, 24, 28; Nov 15, 21; Dec 10, 11, 14
- Assurance: Sept 7, 18; Oct 23; Dec 15, 17, 20, 30
- Bible reading: Sept 14, 21, 29; Oct 12, 17; Nov 1, 4, 6, 10
- Christian community: Sept 19, 22, 23; Oct 11, 22; Nov 12, 17; Dec 11, 13, 25
- Christmas: Nov 28; Dec 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 23, 24, 25
- Compassion: Sept 1, 3; Oct 19; Dec 1, 2, 31
- Creation/Nature's beauty: Sept 17; Oct 24, 25, 29; Nov 23; Dec 4, 27
- Death/Grief: Sept 10, 18, 23, 29; Oct 13, 23; Dec 1, 2, 27, 30
- Evangelism: Nov 7, 9; Dec 9, 11, 16, 18, 24, 28, 31
- Family: Sept 5, 9, 20, 27, 30; Oct 1, 2, 6, 8, 12, 17; Nov 21; Dec 8, 11, 16, 22
- Fear: Sept 2, 24; Nov 5
- Financial concerns: Nov 21, 24; Dec 23
- Forgiveness: Nov 27; Dec 8
- Friendship: Sept 16, 22; Oct 11, 27; Nov 20; Dec 2, 27
- Generosity: Oct 4; Nov 3; Dec 19, 29
- God's love: Sept 20, 29; Oct 3, 17, 23, 30; Nov 19, 23, 28; Dec 4, 10, 21, 27
- God's presence: Sept 10, 24; Oct 3, 7, 28; Nov 13, 20, 28; Dec 7, 10, 20, 24
- God's provision: Oct 2, 16, 19, 21, 25; Nov 8, 18, 25
- God's will: Sept 6, 19, 29; Oct 14, 20
- Gratitude: Sept 28; Nov 3, 24; Dec 19
- Growth: Nov 6, 23
- Guidance: Sept 11, 19; Oct 20; Nov 4, 6
- Hope: Sept 15, 23; Oct 7, 11, 19
- Hospitality: Oct 19; Nov 5, 16; Dec 9
- Healing/illness: Sept 3, 10, 24; Oct 1, 16, 20, 26; Nov 2, 9, 12, 16, 21, 26
- Job issues: Sept 6, 15, 22, 23, 27; Oct 21, 28; Nov 8, 21, 24, 30
- Living our faith: Sept 1, 15, 28, 30; Oct 2, 6, 13, 27; Nov 9, 27; Dec 16, 18, 31
- Loneliness: Sept 29; Oct 19, 22
- Loss: Sept 1, 3, 10, 18, 23, 24, 29; Oct 13; Nov 2, 8, 12, 20, 21; Dec 1, 27
- Mission/Outreach: Sept 1, 5, 27; Nov 26, 30; Dec 5, 9, 16, 18, 24, 26, 28
- New beginnings: Sept 2, 3; Oct 29; Nov 28, 29; Dec 8, 31
- Obedience: Sept 1, 6, 17
- Parenting: Sept 5, 20, 27, 28; Oct 17, 26, 30; Nov 17, 21, 27; Dec 14, 21
- Peace/Unrest: Sept 28; Oct 7, 10, 23, 24
- Prayer: Sept 4, 8, 15; Oct 11, 20, 24, 26, 28; Nov 12, 15, 17, 24; Dec 13, 14, 22
- Salvation: Oct 10, 15, 22; Nov 29; Dec 3
- Serving: Sept 1, 22; Oct 14, 19; Nov 14, 16, 22, 30; Dec 2, 6
- Speaking about faith: Sept 9, 27; Oct 22, 27; Nov 1, 7, 26; Dec 5, 12, 16, 28
- Social issues: Sept 15; Oct 5, 25; Nov 30, Dec 6, 7, 26, 29
- Spiritual gifts: Nov 14, 21, 22, 23, 26
- Spiritual practices: Sept 14, 17, 26; Oct 11, 12; Nov 6, 14, 15, 16, 18; Dec 2, 6
- Stewardship: Sept 12, 26, 28; Oct 4, 13, 19, 25; Nov 14; Dec 26, 29
- Stress: Sept 10, 15; Oct 7, 11, 16; Nov 15, 21, 30; Dec 11
- Strength: Sept 24; Oct 1, 16
- Tolerance: Sept 25; Oct 1, 5, 10, 23, 24
- Trust: Sept 2, 7, 8, 16, 18; Oct 10, 18; Nov 8, 15, 19, 21
- Tragedy: Sept 1, 18, 25; Oct 7, 26

# The One in Need

## Read Galatians 6:2–10

*Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

Galatians 6:9 (KJV)

After a night of pounding rain and howling wind, I awoke to the shrill sound of the telephone ringing. The hurricane had left over two million Gulf Coast residents without electrical power and other necessities of life such as food, water and shelter. Instantly each of us became either a person in need or a person who needed to help.

Ten days later I, who normally live alone, still had ten people staying with me. My daily routine had been tossed aside, and I felt weariness setting in. At that point, God spoke quietly within me. 'Would you rather be the one in need? Imagine their weariness!'

I have concluded that God uses life situations to help us examine ourselves. I had always felt I was a helpful and patient person. But this situation caused me to acknowledge that I needed to grow in my compassion and my willingness to help others. Imagining myself in another person's situation helped me to focus and redirected me to what the Bible tells us God has called us to do. After that, when I felt weary, I remembered that my actions not only help others in a material way but also help others to see God.

**Prayer:** *Patient and generous God, thank you for the opportunity to serve others. Amen*

**Thought for the Day:** When we make ourselves available, God uses us.

**Link2Life:** *Contact your nearest relief organisation and volunteer.*

*Queen Ester Martin (Texas)*

# Igniting Our Faith

## Read Matthew 17:14–20

*Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.'*

Matthew 17:20 (NRSV)

Early one afternoon my nine-year-old son asked me to cook hamburgers for dinner. I told him we could have hamburgers cooked on the barbecue, and he was happy because he wanted to help to light the charcoal. After 30 minutes, however, he was frustrated. He said, 'Mum, we won't be eating for ages yet, and I'm hungry.'

I told him, 'Don't worry. All we need is to light a small piece of charcoal to get it going. It won't take long after that.'

Lighting that small piece of charcoal reminded me of a spiritual retreat I had attended. I reflected on all the problems I'd been experiencing that had pulled me away from God, tested my faith and stamped out the hope in my heart. The retreat was the spark I needed to ignite my faith and to confront the difficulties in my life. As a charcoal fire gets its start from a small piece of charcoal, our faith can be ignited by a small but true dose of love and the confidence to trust that God will not abandon us.

**Prayer:** *Faithful God, grant that in our love for you we will find the spark that ignites our faith. 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. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'*\* Amen

**Thought for the Day:** Each day, keep alive the flame of hope and faith.

*Gabriela Marquez Gomez (Distrito Federal, Mexico)*

# The Second Chance

## Read Ephesians 4:29—5:1

*Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.*

Romans 12:17 (NRSV)

'It Changed My Life in a Minute' is the name of the workshop I coordinate at a hospital in Buenos Aires. When I was 18 years old, an incident happened that changed my life.

One day my school friends and I were waiting at our bus stop. Suddenly, a car jumped a red light and crashed into me. The force of the impact threw me across the pavement and I sustained a severe head injury. I was in hospital for a month, unconscious for most of that time, and my doctors believed I would not survive. But I did survive, and I now walk with the use of special walking canes.

The driver of the car tried everything, including lies, to evade responsibility for the accident or my injuries. I have seen him at various court appearances but at first did not want to look at him. Then I recalled the words of my doctor: 'This girl is a miracle.' I could not waste my miracle being bitter or harbouring thoughts and feelings that would limit my future. And so I began to feel compassion for the offender. 'Because God has given me a second chance at life,' I thought, 'my life should reflect the blessing of that second chance.' Because of that, I have forgiven him.

**Prayer:** *Giver of life, free us from the hurts we have sustained, and help us to repair the harm we have caused others. We are grateful that you forgive us. Amen*

**Thought for the Day:** Learning to forgive frees us to move forward in spite of our losses.

*Paula Tresols (Buenos Aires, Argentina)*

# Intercessory Prayer

## Read 1 Timothy 2:1–6

*Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.*

Philippians 2:4 (NRSV)

When asked, I find it easy to promise people that I will pray about special needs in their lives. However, keeping that promise is not so easy. Other concerns and activities often get in the way of this most sacred of promises—the promise to lift a person into the channel of God’s grace. When I persevere in keeping that promise, I become a link in the chain that includes others who join together as intercessors. But when I neglect to pray, I cheat myself of the privilege of connecting with faithful people who are keeping their sacred promise.

So, to help me remember my promise to pray for others or about particular situations, I carry in my pocket a small, broken link from a chain. Each time I put my hand into that pocket, I can feel the link and choose to be joined with others who are praying. Praying with and for others is a high privilege and holy intimacy that cannot be duplicated.

**Prayer:** *Loving God, open our ears to the cries of those around us who need your help. Remind us that the call to pray for another is always a holy call. Amen*

**Thought for the Day:** Praying for others binds us to them with cords of love.

**Link2Life:** *Create a list of people for whom you will pray regularly.*

*John Eyberg (Oklahoma)*

# Chosen for God's Purposes

## Read Jeremiah 1:4–10

*The Lord said to Jeremiah, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart.'*

Jeremiah 1:5 (NIV)

When you were a child, did you want to hear the story of how you were born? This is the story my mother used to tell me: In 1975 in South Korea, a policeman found me abandoned in a ditch. I was taken to an orphanage, where my adoptive mother later chose me from rows and rows of babies.

I hated the story and never repeated it to anyone. I felt ashamed that I had been abandoned as a new-born baby. I wasn't special enough for my own parents to keep me and not even important enough to leave on someone's doorstep.

Through the joys and heartaches of growing up with my adoptive family, I can now reflect on my humble beginnings and understand that God chose me for my adoptive family. God knew I needed them as much as they needed me.

God often uses people whom the world would not pick to influence others. Moses was 'slow of speech and tongue' (Exodus 4:10, NIV); Jeremiah was 'only a child' (Jeremiah 1:6, NIV); the woman at the well was a social outcast; Rahab was a prostitute. God chooses such people to show us that no matter where we begin, if we allow God to form us and mould us, we can make a difference in the world for God.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, use us to lead people to you. Amen*

**Thought for the Day:** No matter who we are or where we come from, God can use us.

*Angela Steed (Florida)*

# Our Life's Work\*

## Read Matthew 5:1–12

*God said to Moses, 'See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.'*

Hebrews 8:5 (NIV)

Few are called to be leaders like Moses, but all are called to make things; for God who is *our* maker gave us this instinct. How soon we begin with bricks, sand and building-blocks to express this desire!

We were made for full employment. Some make laws; others make ships, cars, homes and gardens. More important, in all our making of things, we are being made ourselves for better or for worse.

Are we consciously working, day by day, in accordance with God's design? In obedience to God's command, Moses rose up early in the morning to be alone with God. The result of his keeping that appointment was the glory of God upon his way and upon his face, and knowledge concerning his life's work.

God had made this world and saw that it was good. We seek, through Christ, to find and to do God's will in all things in this world that God created. In this way, we help to fulfil God's redemptive love and purpose, both in us as individuals and in the world around us.

**Prayer:** *O God, help us this day to offer ourselves and all our work to your glory. Guide us in all we do, that as you make all things according to your pattern, you may also make our lives into the likeness of Christ. In his name we pray. Amen*

**Thought for the Day:** When we are dedicated to God's service, our work will bear good fruit.

\*To celebrate our 75th Anniversary, we have included this meditation which was originally published on 5 March 1955.

*H. Cecil Pawson (England)*

# Here Today, Here Tomorrow

**Read: Psalm 145:1–9**

*Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.*

Psalm 145:13 (NRSV)

I listened to a group of friends as they talked about rising prices, the lack of jobs and moral decline. I wondered, 'What will life be like for my niece and nephews? What will they face in the coming years?' Fear rose within me. But then I thought of Psalm 145:13.

God isn't a fad—here today, gone in a few weeks or years. The Bible tells us that God was here in the beginning (Genesis 1:1) and will remain beyond the end of time. The same God who walked with the great men and women of the Old Testament still walks among us today and will continue to offer strength and wisdom to future generations. What a comforting thought!

My family coming up in the next generation and their families in the future will face struggles, but they don't have to go it alone. In 2 Samuel 22:31 we read that God 'is a shield for all who take refuge in him' (NRSV). Anyone who looks to God for guidance and 'strength for the battle' will find them provided (Psalm 18:39, NRSV). God's promises are sure, for all time.

**Prayer:** *God of Abraham and Moses, of all who seek to follow you now and in the days to come, praise your name! You are truly Lord of all, from generation to generation. Amen*

**Thought for the Day:** From generation to generation, God walks with us.

*Connie L. Coppings (Kentucky)*

# No Request Too Small

**Read: Matthew 21:18–22**

*Pray without ceasing.*

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NRSV)

'You prayed about a lost pen?' my friend exclaimed. I assured her that we did and that we found Bill's treasured pen inside his suit pocket the next day. My friend felt that to pray for something as insignificant as a pen was exploiting God's goodness and mercy. I disagreed with her and explained that we pray about things like lost pens, unexpected dinner guests, rude remarks and all things that are a part of our everyday lives. When our prayers are answered, we celebrate with thanksgiving for God's graciousness. We see God as a member of our family, and God celebrates with us too. When we include God in every aspect of our lives, we feel closeness and intimacy with our Creator.

Jesus told his disciples, 'Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive' (Matthew 21:22, NRSV). I well remember whispering my favourite plea the evenings when unexpected dinner guests arrive for dinner and I've prepared food only for the seven in our family. 'Please, Lord, loaves and fishes' (see Mark 6:34–44). God knows what I mean by that prayer, and we have never had guests leave the table hungry.

Whether our prayer requests are large or small, God responds with joy to our trust.

**Prayer:** *Dear Father, help us understand that you want to be involved in every detail of our lives, no matter how insignificant it may be. Amen*

**Thought for the Day:** Every part of our day can be an occasion to pray.

*Mary E. Dess (California)*

# Telling the Truth

## Read Acts 22:1–16

*As it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken.*

2 Corinthians 4:13 (NRSV)

I joined the church when I was young. I didn't know what being a Christian meant. I was attracted to church activities: singing songs, having overnight prayer meetings and eating goat meat at church gatherings.

Our parents were the first to join a new church in our area, and we followed them. Many people laughed at us because most members of the church were older; it was like the church of old people. Our faith decreased because of how our friends looked at us. When they asked me to what church I belonged or if I still went to that church, I told them lies: 'Oh, I stopped going to that church some time ago.'

One day as I was reading the Bible, I came across the story of Paul. This apostle told people the truth about the life he lived before he knew Christ. Paul spoke with confidence, telling the truth in the presence of a commander and a mob of people, even though people had threatened to kill him. Shame on me for failing to tell the truth to my relatives, who would not harm me!

Speaking about Christ is part of what it means to be Christian.

**Prayer:** *Thank you, God, for giving us life and for protecting us from harm. You are worthy of praise! Keep us from going in the wrong direction, call to us when we are lost, and lead us in the right direction. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen*

**Thought for the Day:** Knowing Christ is a privilege to be proud of and to proclaim.

*Kondwani Beza (Mzimba, Malawi)*

# God is Able

## Read Psalm 46

*God is our shelter and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.*

Psalm 46:1 (GNB)

The doctor's words hit like a punch in the stomach: 'You have Parkinson's Disease.' Of course, this was not what I wanted to hear. Nor did I want to be told a couple of months later that a deadly gene was destroying every organ in my son's body. Within four days he moved from the intensive-care unit to heaven. Months later a beloved aunt was placed in a hospice, to be provided with only palliative care. The night after my aunt's funeral, my mother suffered a massive brain haemorrhage, and the doctors agreed that she could not live without life support. This cluster of losses left me reeling emotionally. Just when I would think I was adjusting, another beloved person would die. This went on for two-and-a-half years.

Recently someone asked, 'What's going to hit your family next?' Frankly, I don't want to know. What I do know is that I am clinging to God's power to help me through these days of grief and sorrow. This power is my hope for the future. At the moment I am weak, but I know that God is strong and is able to carry me through. How do I know? The Bible tells me so. I am supported by God's comforting presence that I experience in loving acts of kindness from God's people.

**Prayer:** *Thank you, Lord, for carrying us through life's unwanted places. Amen*

**Thought for the Day:** When I am weak, God demonstrates strength.

*Janet Huff (Illinois)*

# Learning to Listen

## Read 1 Kings 19:1–18

*Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger.*

James 1:19 (NRSV)

For 50 years I have been a licensed amateur (ham) radio operator. Although I enjoy talking with people around the globe, over those years I have probably done more listening than talking. Wanting to hear from as many countries as possible, I would spend hours waiting for a particular international broadcast station. I had to listen patiently for the often-faint sounds of the station in the midst of static and interference from more powerful stations and from some governments that sent out signals to jam certain broadcasts.

I compare this practice of listening to the ham radio to the spiritual practice of discerning God's voice among the often louder voices of the world. When we turn our spiritual 'radio' on, the first thing we have to do is to listen carefully and patiently to ensure that no other station is using the frequency that we have chosen. This reminded me of the words of James in our quoted scripture for today, that everyone should be quick to listen and slow to speak (James 1:19). When I am quick to speak, I am prone to miss what is being said. Listening first enables me to hear the message. When I receive/hear the message meant for me, it helps me to understand what another person is thinking and feeling.

Our God often speaks in a still, quiet voice (1 Kings 19:12) that can easily be missed unless we listen patiently in the midst of life's distractions.

**Prayer:** *Master, please give us the courage and patience to listen to your voice and also to each other. Amen*

**Thought for the Day:** Listen for God's quiet voice in loud places.

*Ernest S. Lyght (West Virginia)*

# So Much More

## Read 2 Chronicles 25:1–10

*Amaziah said to the man of God, 'But what shall we do about the hundred talents that I have given to the army of Israel?' The man of God answered, 'The Lord is able to give you much more than this.'*

2 Chronicles 25:9 (NRSV)

Our house is now worth less than half of what we paid for it. Like many others, we have felt the sting of what is now officially a global economic crisis. We have been working and saving for years, only to discover that what we thought would be our security for our later years is now worth very little.

The Bible shows that relying on human strategies is not new. For example, as a new king, Amaziah faced daunting obstacles, so he bought support to deal with his enemies. Then he felt confident enough to go into battle. But God's prophet explained to Amaziah that winning battles comes not from reliance on armies but from God alone.

I am learning the same lesson. The small advantages we may seem to gain by using earthly means to wage war on our circumstances are nothing compared to what God can give us. Like Amaziah, from time to time many of us want an earthly, tangible and immediate return on our investments. What God promises is intangible and infinitely more valuable. How have you invested your 'hundred talents of silver'? As the prophet said, 'The Lord is able to give you much more than this.'

**Prayer:** *Dear God, help us to look to the future with confidence in your promises. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen*

**Thought for the Day:** What God offers is more certain than anything any human plan could bring us.

*Judith Purkiss (London, England)*

# The Healer of Broken Hearts

## Read Luke 4:16–21

*Jesus read, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted.'*

Luke 4:18 (KJV)

I recently encountered a situation that brought back memories of some past hurtful events. However, I found that I did not feel as hurt as I had back then. In reality, the wrongs others had inflicted on me had done little real harm; nevertheless, those hurtful actions had been very distressing at the time. Commenting to my wife about the past, I said, 'You know, it really doesn't matter any more.'

She replied, 'It really never did', and I responded, 'Yes, I know. But now it doesn't matter to me.' At that moment I realised that God had brought healing to my broken heart.

Wounds of the heart are unique to the person who suffers them. Some hurts we suffer are deeper than others, but every wound affects us. Sometimes the wound doesn't heal quickly. Sometimes we recover without a scar, and sometimes the scar left behind seems never to disappear. Even when others tell us that it shouldn't matter, it may still matter to us. But in every situation, if we turn to Christ, we will find that he still heals broken hearts.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, help us to move beyond the past and trust you to heal our wounds. Amen*

**Thought for the Day:** God is in the business of mending broken hearts.

**Link2Life:** *Decide to let go of one past hurt and forgive the one who hurt you.*

*Mark Beaird (Alabama)*

# A Lifelong Tradition

## Read Deuteronomy 11:18–21

*Teach [the Lord's words] to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.*

Deuteronomy 11:19 (NRSV)

For most of our 60-year marriage, my husband and I have read *The Upper Room* and our Bible together. Often, we have empathised with a writer's experience and included them in our prayers that day. Each message has enriched our lives.

However, advancing age is taking its toll, and we can't always recall what we read an hour earlier! This upsets us because these devotions are too meaningful to simply allow ourselves to forget. We want to retain what we've read so that we can continue growing closer to God.

We have discovered a solution that is helping us retain the content of the message. Before we begin reading the present day's message, we review the message from the day before. Our sluggish memories begin to 'click in' as we recall the details. This procedure has become important to us. It's based on a principle that we learned in school that constant repetition helps us to retain information. We want to continue to grow mentally and spiritually as long as we have physical life so that we can always be useful to God.

**Prayer:** *God of all our days, we trust you to be with us as we age. Help us and guide us to take care of ourselves so we can keep alert and serve you as long as we are able. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen*

**Thought for the Day:** Repetition can be an important key to retaining knowledge.

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*June Megill (North Carolina)*

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