

An Introduction - *The Upper Room* - British Edition



The Upper Room daily devotional guide British edition was first published in 1954, by St Andrews Press. In 1984 the Methodist Publishing House became the publisher and continued in this role until 2008. The aim of everyone involved with the magazine has been to provide a resource which encourages daily devotional reading of Scripture, prayer and meditation, and the feeling of being involved in a worldwide family of three million people who use *The Upper Room* every day.

Part of the mission of *The Upper Room* has been to reach out to people who may have no formal connection with Christianity, who may not go to church, but who are nevertheless seeking a spiritual dimension to their lives. *The Upper Room* is unique in that its readers are also its writers; Christians who are seeking to share their experiences with others in a direct, honest statement of personal faith in Christ, and the ways in which faith grows. In this way *The Upper Room* has proved to be an excellent tool for reaching out to people wherever they are and whatever their background and current circumstances.

One of the most important ministries of the British edition has been its outreach to prisons. The decision to extend this work was taken after the Editor received a letter from a prison chaplain, in which he explained that a prisoner on suicide watch had come across a copy of *The Upper Room*, had asked for a Bible to read alongside it, and had subsequently found new reason to live. The prison population is more than 70,000 in the UK, and in order to try to reach some of these with *The Upper Room*, a 'sponsor a prison subscription' scheme was set up. Individuals contributed to pay for a year's subscription to the magazine for a prisoner. At the same time, readers were invited to join in a prayer ministry for prisoners and for prison chaplains.

Writers' meditations are key to the ministry of *the Upper Room*, and a number of workshops for writers have been held in England and Scotland. The aim of them is to demonstrate that good devotional writing begins with Scripture, and that the more we meditate on Scripture, the more is revealed to us from it. Participants are shown how to construct a meditation and how to improve their writing, offering writers the chance to share experiences and to keep in contact. As a result of the workshops, the Editor has been able to include more meditations by British writers, so expanding the appeal of the edition, and encouraging writers to send in more meditations.

Contact with readers of the magazine is also crucial. Many correspondents share news and views about the British edition: how it used within their church; how a particular meditation has helped them through a difficult time; how the magazine has been used to help people, often strangers, who have responded to the sharing of experiences.



The Upper Room is available from all good Christian Bookshops, and also directly from BRF via:

www.biblereadingnotes.org.uk