

Upper Room Article Writer Guidelines

Subject: Upper Room Article Writer Guidelines

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From: mbeaty at Upper Room

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A. Introduction

The meditations in each issue are written by people just like you, people who are listening to God and trying to live by what they hear. The Upper Room is built on a worldwide community of Christians who share their faith with one another.

The Upper Room is meant for an international, interdenominational audience. We want to encourage Christians in their personal life of prayer and discipleship. We seek to build on what unites us as believers and to link believers together in prayer around the world.

Literally millions of people use the magazine each day. Your meditation will be sent around the world, to be translated into more than 40 languages and printed in over 60 editions. Those who read the day's meditation and pray the prayer join with others in over 80 countries around the world, reading the same passage of scripture and bringing the same concerns before God.

Have God's care and presence become real for you in your interaction with others? Has the Bible given you guidance and helped you see God at work? Has the meaning of scripture become personal for you as you reflected on it? Then you have something to share in a meditation.

B. Where do I begin?

You begin in your own relationship with God. Christians believe God speaks to us and guides us as we study the Bible and pray. Good meditations are closely tied to scripture and show how it has shed light on a specific situation. Good meditations make the message of the Bible come alive.

Good devotional writing is first of all authentic. It connects real events of daily life with the ongoing activity of God. It comes across as the direct, honest statement of personal faith in Christ and how that faith grows. It is one believer sharing with another an insight of struggle about what it means to live faithfully.

Second, good devotional writing uses many sensory details-- what color it was, how high it bounced, what it smelled like. The more sensory details the writing includes, the better. Though the events of daily life may seem too mundane to be the subject for devotional writing, actually they provide the richest store of sensory details. And when we connect God's activity to common objects and activities, each encounter with them can serve as a reminder of God's work.

Finally, good devotional writing is exploratory. It searches and considers

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and asks questions. It examines the faith without knowing in advance what all the answers will be. It is open to God's continuing self-revelation through scripture, people, and events. Good writing chronicles growth and change, seeing God behind both.

C. What goes in a meditation?

Each day's meditation includes a title, a suggested Bible reading, a scripture text, a personal witness or reflection on scripture, a prayer, a "thought for the day" (a pithy, summarizing statement), and a suggested subject for prayer during the day (usually tied to the content of the story). Including all of these elements, the meditation should be about 250 words long. Indicate what version of the Bible is quoted in the text, and give references for any scripture passages mentioned.

Use clear, simple words, and develop one idea only. Think about how you can deepen the Christian commitment of readers and nurture their spiritual growth. Encourage readers to deeper engagement with the Bible.

Include your name, address, and social security number on each page you submit. If possible, please type your meditation, single spaced. Always give the original source of any materials you quote. Meditations containing quotes or other secondary material which cannot be verified will not be used.

D. What should not go in a meditation?

Previously published material cannot be used.

Hymns, poems, and word plays such as acrostics or homonyms make meditations unusable because the material in The Upper Room is translated into many languages. Translation cannot do justice to these forms.

Also, very familiar illustrations ("The Touch of the Master's Hand," stories like George Washington cutting down the cherry tree) have little impact and should not be used. Remember that your personal experience provides unique material--no one is exactly like you.

E. How do I get started writing a meditation?

When you find yourself in the middle of some situation thinking, "Why--that's how God is, too!" or, "That's like that story in the Bible . . .," that can become a meditation. Excellent ideas come from reading and meditating in scripture, looking for connections between it and daily life. When you see such a helpful connection, here's a simple formula for getting it to paper:

1. Retell the Bible teaching or summarize the passage briefly.

2. Describe the situation that you link to the Bible passage, using a specific incident. Write down as many details of the real-life situation as you can. For example, if you write about an incident when people were

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talking, write down what each person said.

3. Tell how you can apply this spiritual truth in days to come.

4. After a few days, look carefully at what you have written. Decide which details best convey your message, and delete the others. Ask yourself whether this insight will be helpful to believers in other countries and other situations.

If you feel that it will, add any elements that are necessary to The Upper Room's format. Then you are ready to submit your meditation for consideration for possible use in The Upper Room.

F. When are the deadlines?

We continually need meditations, and you can submit a meditation at any time. However, seasonal material should reach us fifteen months before use date. Below are the due dates and special emphases for the various issues.

January - February Issue Deadline: August 1 of second year preceding. (For example, 2006 should reach

us by Aug. 1, 2004) Special emphases: New Year, Epiphany, Ash Wednesday

March - April Issue Deadline: Oct. 1 of second year preceding Special emphases: Lent, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, World Day of Prayer

May - June Issue Deadline: Dec. 1 of second year preceding Special emphases: Festival of the Christian home, Ascension Day, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday

July - August Issue Deadline: Feb. 1 of preceding year Special emphases: Creative uses of leisure

September - October Issue Deadline: April 1 of preceding year Special emphases: World Communion

Sunday, God and our daily work

November - December Issue Deadline: June 1 of preceding year Special emphases: Bible Sunday, All

Saints' Day, Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas

F. When will I know if my meditation is going to be used?

If your work is being considered for use, we will send you a postcard, usually within six weeks after receiving your work. Later, if your meditation is chosen for publication, you will receive a copyright release card to sign and return to us. It may be as much as a year before a final decision is made; seasonal material may be held even longer. If you wish to be notified if your work is eliminated from consideration, include a stamped, self-addressed postcard FOR EACH MEDITATION. We are unable to give updates on the status of individual meditations. All published meditations

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are edited. We buy the right to translate your meditation for one-time use in our editions around the world, including electronic and software-driven formats. We pay \$25.00 for each meditation, on publication.

G. Where do I send my meditation?

Meditations should be mailed to:
Office of the Managing Editor
THE UPPER ROOM MAGAZINE
P.O. Box 340004
Nashville, TN 37203-0004
E-Mail: TheUpperRoomMagazine@upperroom.org

Meditations cannot be returned, so please keep copies of what you submit. Please send no more than three meditations at a time. If you wish to know we have received your work, include a stamped, self-addressed postcard (in addition to the ones above). We will use the postcard to notify you that your work has reached us.

If you are submitting through electronic mail, do not send attachments. Your meditation should be in the body of your e-mail. If you are sending more than one meditation, it is preferable that you send them individually so that we do not have to cut and paste. Also, please provide us with a postal address with each meditation for future correspondence, as well as your email address. Thank you.

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Marilyn Beaty
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The Upper Room Magazine
UPPER ROOM MINISTRIES DIVISION OF GBOD
www.upperroom.org

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