

Additional guidance on writing

These notes for writers are taken from a Devotional Writing Workshop led by Tia Runion of Upper Room Ministries

The purpose of The Upper Room magazine is to help people grow in relationship with God through daily spiritual practice. We want writing that is clear, concrete, and direct (no abstract/ theological jargon) and that helps people see God's work in our lives and in the world through common, everyday experiences and choices. We look for writing that is authentic, exploratory (not preachy), uses scripture responsibly and in context, and makes sense in other cultures.

The three main elements of a meditation:

1. Personal story
2. Connection to scripture
3. Takeaway/universal application: This is the part of a meditation that is most often missing. What do you want the reader to *do* after reading your meditation? What did you learn from your experience that is applicable to my life and the lives of many other people?

For examples click here look inside this year's issues by clicking the links:

Look inside [January–April 2023](#)

Look inside [May–August 2023](#)

Look inside [September–December 2023](#)

As you read examples of The Upper Room meditations think about:

What is helpful about this meditation from a faith or devotional perspective?
What personal connections do you make to this meditation?
How does the writer make a connection to scripture?
What do you appreciate or admire about this meditation as a writer?
What do you want to know more about?
What would make this meditation stronger?

Here are some questions to help you get started on your competition entry:

When in your life has an ordinary experience/event led to a significant insight that ultimately changed the course of your spiritual journey? (The experience/event does not have to be religious or spiritual. It could have occurred while hiking in the woods, in a conversation over coffee with your best friend, while engaging in a community service project, and so on.)

What emotions did you experience? What did you see, hear, smell, taste? Use concrete, sensory detail when describing your experience.

What character, passage, or story from scripture do you connect with your experience?
What guidance, wisdom, comfort, new understanding of yourself/others has your experience given you?

What invitation for growth is God offering you through the experience? How could that invitation apply to the lives of others as well? How do you want your words to connect with the life of the reader?

You may find it helpful to set out your reflection using this template

Title: _____

Scripture Reading: _____

Quoted Scripture Verse: _____

_____ (version, e.g. KJV, NIV, NRSV)

Personal Story: _____

Theological Reflection/Connection to Scripture: _____

Application/ Takeaway: _____

Prayer: _____

Thought for the Day: _____

Prayer Focus: _____

Maximum total word count: 300

If you're still finding it difficult to decide what to write about, or where to start on your competition entry, it might be helpful to write your spiritual autobiography...

A spiritual autobiography is the story of significant events, people and/or places that have influenced your relationship with God; it is the story of your personal journey with God.

What are the small, seemingly ordinary moments in your life that have ultimately had a profound effect on your spiritual journey? These are things that spiritual autobiographies are made of. Such moments might include things like making an unexpected friend, a poem that strikes a special chord, or a new direction in life that came from being open to a new opportunity.

Don't forget to provide your contact details – name, email address, postal address – when you submit your entry. Deadline is midnight on 30 November 2023.