

George Mueller - Relying on God and Making Things Happen.

Balancing our reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit and working to be intentional with our lives of faith.

Hebrews 6:12, Psalm 55:22, 1Peter 5:6-7, Matthew 6:25

Well, as usual for me, I will present a hero of faith to you this morning because God tells us to look to heroes, I have brought this up before, Heb 6 :12 tells us to be ***“imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”***

This hero is George Mueller, 1805 – 1898, a preacher, evangelist and director of the Scripture Knowledge Institute.

Mr. Mueller is someone we can and should look up to, someone we would be blessed to examine and extract some kind beneficial knowledge, or practice to help our own walk of faith.

A few titles biographies about Mueller, there are many, are: George Mueller – Young Rebel in Bristol, George Mueller – The Man of Faith, and more pointedly Robber of the Cruel Streets – the prayerful life of George Muller. All of these works tell the story of a man who began life as a very sinful person who was transformed by God to be an inspirational example of a person who used prayer in dramatic fashion. Biographer A. T. Pierson said it this way, George Mueller “devised large and liberal things for the Lord's cause.”ⁱPrayers were a foundational way Mueller told people about how God was real – and he did allot of praying!

As I provide a limited recap of his life, let me be clear – this is not for replication. You can do yourself great disservice by hearing about amazing things and then

condemning yourself for not being the same or immediately trying to do all the same things. We can't – no one can – there was only one George Mueller. But God loves our efforts to resist the patterns of this world to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom12:2) and to remember that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses who can help us throw off the things that hinder us, throw off the sin that so easily entangles us – and therefore run more effectively within the race that is set before each of us while fixing our eyes on Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith (Heb12:1-2) Don't try to replicate, rather – sit back, relax and just listen to the words and allow the Holy Spirit to point out ways that you can run your race a bit better.

God's word was what guided Mueller, a few scriptures that he often looked too; *Psalm 55:22 Cast your burden upon the LORD (pray) and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.*

1Peter 5:6-7 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, so that in due time He may exalt you. 7Cast all your anxiety on Him (Pray), because He cares for you.

Matthew 6:25 Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?

My Goals to inspire you are to:

- Remind us all of Gods desire to spread the Gospel with the way we live our lives.
- Strengthen prayers, that they would increase in number, increase in intensity, and increase in their purity for God.

- Love and serve people for the: glorification of God, the spreading of the gospel, and the encouragement of each other's faith.
- Use George Mueller's life to illustrate how knowledge and confidence in God is not misplaced.

For time sake I will share a few highlights about;

1. His early life and salvation – a wonderful work of God.
2. His strategy – the way he chose particular ways of relying on God while also being very strategic and intentional about what he did – all to show people that God is real.
3. A few basic ways we should consider some form of mimicking Mueller.

His Early Life

For the first 20 years of his life Mueller lived in ways that made him a highly unlikely candidate for the ministry. He openly records that by the age of 10 he regularly stole money from his father and used it to drink, smoke, gamble and spend time with women.ⁱⁱ A significant quote from him *“My mother died suddenly when I was fourteen years old. That night I played cards until two in the morning, and went to a tavern the next day. Her death made no lasting impression on me. Instead, I grew worse.”*ⁱⁱⁱ

At 16 he spent 6 days on a “pleasure trip” filled with sin. When he knew his father was onto his activity he returned home just long enough to steal all the money he could find and take off again. He spent all that and more at an expensive hotel and then snuck off to a second, spending like he had deep pockets. When he slipped away from the second hotel the manager had the police round him up and throw him in jail. He sat for 24 days with other thieves

and even murders before his father bailed him out, beat him severely and brought him home.^{iv}

His Conversion

His conversion happened slowly. Mueller often wanted to change and be different, to be a more moral person. But he just couldn't stay consistent in good behavior. He would fall into habits of drink, smoke, gamble and girls. But when his father sent him off to boarding school, an important seed was planted in the person of Christoph Leopold Fredrick Beta^v, a classmate but no friend of Mueller's.

His father then sent him to the University of Halle to study divinity and prepare for the ministry because that would be a good living and that way, his son would be able to provide him with a comfortable retirement. Neither he nor George had any spiritual aspirations.^{vi} Muller says, I acted in wicked behavior and unrepentant spirit ... *Despite my sinful lifestyle and cold heart, God had mercy on me. I was as careless as ever. I had no Bible and had not read any Scripture for years. I seldom went to church; and, out of custom only, I took the Lords Supper twice a year. I never heard the gospel preached. Nobody told me that Jesus (commanded) meant for Christians, by the help of God, to live according to the Holy Scriptures. ...*^{vii}

George had often felt deeply convicted to change and be a different person. While at university he writes; *One day while in a tavern with some of my wild friends, I saw one of my former classmates named Beta. I (had) met him four years earlier... and, because he was so quiet and serious, I despised him. It now appeared wise for me to choose him as my friend, thinking that better companions*

would help me improve my conduct.but Beta was a backslider. ...I sought his friendship because I thought it would lead me to a moral life, and he gladly became my friend because he thought it would bring him some good times.

They spent much time together, even traveling to Switzerland on holiday where Mueller kept the money purse and basically paid for expenses while saving much of it for himself.^{viii} Then Beta had tasted enough of the wicked life Mueller showed him. He returned to following Jesus which included attending a bible study. Beta invited Mueller to come also. So, it was through small group bible study that Mueller was truly awakened to Jesus. He wrote, of the invitation and meeting: *When I heard this, I felt as if I had found the treasure I had been seeking all my life. The entire evening made a deep impression on me. I felt happy, although if I had been asked why, I could not have clearly explained it. When we walked home, I said to Beta, "Everything we have seen on our journey to Switzerland and all of our former pleasures are nothing in comparison with this evening."*^{ix}

If that's not a great endorsement to our small group bible studies, I don't know what is! Small groups are wonderful!

Now awakened Mueller was hungry to save other lost souls like he had been. He wanted to be a missionary! His father was furious, his son working as a missionary would never be able to provide him with a comfortable retirement – he immediately stopped paying for George's tuition. Another key seed was planted in Mueller's life by God. He took advantage of free lodging for 2 months at an orphan house near Halle University in Saxony Germany. This 5 story building was built 100 years before George was born. It was the largest building in Germany and had its own hospital, medicine lab, printing shop, school and

accommodations for the elderly, widows and orphans. This was created by August Herman Franke, a professor of divinity at the university.^x Its magnificent blessing upon the needy was inspirational to Mueller, in ways he never dreamed it would be. His father cutting him off from financial assistance was a beginning to an incredible life of prayer. George prayed for God to help him with his schooling and wealthy American students needing German lessons were soon knocking on his door. George worked his way through school and enrolled with the London Missionary Society. Several things happened to show God was leading. In 1929 Mueller was told to go to London for missionary training instead of abroad, he got sick, so sick that he was given a lifetime exemption from military service that was required of Prussian men, and when he got to London his health improved so slowly that he was sent to the seaside town of Teignmouth for the “fresh air”.^{xi} Here he met a local preacher Henry Craik who introduced him to a missionary dentist by the name of Anthony Norris Groves – who, with his wife, sold all they owned, gave away a large inheritance to missions, and gave up a lucrative dental practice so that, they could help the poor in Bagdad. Even more impressive to Mueller was the Groves trusting God for all financial support. They only prayed for their needs and allowed God to answer the prayers.^{xii} Mueller’s growing passion to begin working caused a split with the Missionary Society and in 1830 he was back in Teignmouth and called upon to pastor at the Ebenezer Chapel in Teignmouth, a congregation of 18 people. During this year he became convinced of the necessity of believer's baptism, and was re-baptized.^{xiii}

His Strategy

His life has taken on enough influence of the beauty of living a life completely dependent on God, that George makes some changes. And these were strategic

changes. Changes in the way He lived so that – these practices of life – would be ways that God was seen, glorified and trusted more. So, in the same year he enjoyed a believer’s baptism and began preaching in Teignmouth, he married Sarah Groves, the sister of the sacrificial missionary dentist and gave up receiving a regular salary – posting a box in the entryway of the chapel for people to place money in if they wanted. He was determined to rely on God and God alone (Matt6:25 – do not worry about food, or drink, or cloths). This practice of faith was a mix of strategy and conviction. He was convicted by scripture to live this way, but he wanted people to see that God is real by the way God provided for him. God continually supplied all the needs Sarah and George needed as well as countless other prayers. Let’s not get too romantic though, George and Sarah had sorrow too, in 1831 Sarah gave birth to a still born child.^{xiv} In 1832 Mueller went to Bristol, England and partnered in preaching with his good friend Henry Craik.^{xv} Mueller pastored the same church there for over sixty-six years. Bristol was visited with a plague of cholera which took many lives, but none of those among whom he and Craik ministered. On September 17, 1832 their daughter Lydia, was born. In 1834 The Scripture Knowledge Institute was founded and his son Elijah was born. The institute was a strategic move again. Mueller was frustrated with the liberalism, the theologies, and the worldly strategies of existing mission organizations ¹⁴ (like going into debt¹³). So he prayed, then got up and founded the institute with 4 branches: 1) Schools for children and adults to teach Bible knowledge, 2) Bible distribution, 3) missionary support, 4) tract and book distribution. He wanted to get the knowledge and word of God out into the world! By 1835 Elijah died from ammonia and the continual plight on the orphans in Bristol was a constant wound of humanity that Mueller could not ignore. The

common though and reaction of society towards orphans at this time was to treat them as filth. The government placed them in work houses with the mentally ill and violent adults.^{xvi} The Scripture Knowledge Institute added a 5th effort - "to board, clothe and Scripturally educate *destitute* children who have lost both parents by death."¹⁵

The accomplishments of all five branches were significant,¹⁶ but the one he was known for around the world in his own lifetime, and still today, was the orphan ministry. He built five large orphan houses and cared for 10,024 orphans in his life. When he started in 1834 there were accommodations for 3,600 orphans in all of England and twice that many children under eight were in prison.¹⁷ One of the great effects of Mueller's ministry was to inspire others so that "fifty years after Mr. Mueller began his work, at least one hundred thousand orphans were cared for in England alone."¹⁸

He did all this while he was preaching three times a week from 1830 to 1898, at least 10,000 times¹⁹ and dealing with tragedies like their fourth child being stillborn. When he turned 70 he fulfilled a life-long dream of missionary work for the next 17 years until he was 87. He traveled to 42 countries,²⁰ preaching on average of once a day,²¹ and addressing some three million people.²² During the year of 1880 He preached nine times in Minneapolis. From the end of his travels in 1892 (when he was 87) until his death he preached in his church and worked for the Scripture Knowledge Institute.

At his funeral in Bristol, "Tens of thousands of people reverently stood along the route of (a) simple procession; men left their workshops and offices, women left their elegant homes or humble kitchens, all seeking to pay a last token of respect."²⁵ A thousand children gathered for a service at the Orphan House No. 3. They had now "for a second time lost a 'father'."²⁶

He had read his Bible from end to end almost 200 times.²⁷ He had prayed in over 140 million dollars^{xvii} for the Orphans in today's currency and never asked anyone directly for money. He never took a salary in the last 68 years of his ministry, but trusted God to put in people's hearts to send him what he needed. He never took out a loan or went into debt.²⁹

He had been married twice: to Mary Groves when he was 25 for 39 years, and to Susannah Sangar when he was 66, for 23 years.. Mary bore him four children. Two were stillborn. Of the 2 that survived, the one son Elijah died when he was a year old. His daughter Lydia died in 1890 when he was 57 years old. Five years later Mueller lost his second wife, just three years before he died. And so he outlived his family and was left alone with his Savior, his church, and two thousand children. He preached Mary's funeral sermon when he was 64,³⁰ and he preached Susannah's funeral sermon when he was 90.³¹

A few examples of prayer.

The entire effort of the Scripture Knowledge institute was given over to prayer. He cast his cares upon the Lord daily (Ps55:22 cast your burden, 1Pt5:6-7 cast your anxiety). The number of stories of answered prayer are inspiring.

A few examples - An orphan house boiler stopped working; Müller needed to have it fixed. This was a problem, because the boiler was bricked up and the weather was worsening with each day. So he prayed for two things; firstly that the workers he had hired would have a mind to work throughout the night, and secondly that the weather would let up. ...before the workmen arrived, a southerly wind began to blow and it was so mild that no fires were needed to heat the buildings. That evening, the foreman of the company instructed the men to report back first thing

in the morning but The team told him they would prefer to work through the night.^{xviii}

Once, while crossing the Atlantic in August 1877, his ship ran into thick fog. He explained to the captain that he needed to be in Quebec by the following afternoon, but Captain Joseph E. Dutton said that he was slowing the ship down for safety. Mueller asked to use the chartroom to pray for the lifting of the fog. The captain followed him down, claiming it would be a waste of time. After Müller prayed a very simple prayer, the captain started to pray, but Müller stopped him; partly because of the captain's unbelief, but mainly because he believed the prayer had already been answered. Müller said, "Captain, I have known my Lord for more than fifty years and there is not one instance that I have failed to have an audience with the King. Get up, Captain, for you will find that the fog has gone." When the two men went back to the bridge, they found the fog had lifted, and Müller was able to keep his appointment. The captain became a Christian shortly afterwards.^{xix}

Then there is the breakfast story. Made "more" known due to a veggie tale rendition in our time.... *"The children are dressed and ready for school. But there is no food for them to eat," the housemother of the orphanage informed George Mueller. George asked her to take the 300 children into the dining room and have them sit at the tables. He thanked God for the food and waited. George knew God would provide food for the children as he always did. Within minutes, a baker knocked on the door. "Mr. Mueller," he said, "last night I could not sleep. Somehow I knew that you would need bread this morning. I got up and baked three batches for you. I will bring it in."*

Soon, there was another knock at the door. It was the milkman. His cart had broken down in front of the orphanage. The milk would spoil by the time the wheel was fixed. He asked George if he could use some free milk. George smiled as the milkman brought in ten large cans of milk. It was just enough for the 300 thirsty children.^{xx}

- Wow.....prayer, sweet, purity of need and desire for God to be glorified prayer.

Yet there is strategy to point out. Orphan work was not chosen by Mueller just because it was so needed, indeed it was. But Mueller was combining the needs of these poor children with a spiritual need of the people of God. George Mueller often looked out over the people of faith and saw unnecessary struggle due to doubt. He wanted the church to know that God does answer prayer, that God does act in everyday affairs in our lives, that God can be trusted. I quote:

(The best way to help people see and trust God, seems to be), by the establishing of an Orphan-House. It needed to be something which could be seen, even by the natural eye. Now, if I, a poor man, simply by prayer and faith, obtained, without asking any individual, the means for establishing and carrying on an Orphan-House: there would be something which, with the Lord's blessing, might be instrumental in strengthening the faith of the children of God besides being a testimony to the consciences of the unconverted, of the reality of the things of God. This, then, was the primary reason, for establishing the Orphan-House. . . . The first and primary object of the work was, (and still is) that God might be magnified by the fact, that the orphans under my care are provided, with all they need, only by prayer and faith, without any one being asked by me or my fellow-laborers, whereby it may be seen, that God is FAITHFUL STILL, and HEARS PRAYER STILL.^{xxi}

And God did answer. One rented orphan house turned into 2, and then 3, and then land was purchased out of the gloom of the city in the fresh air and house after house was built. Each and every situation was seen as impossible, or too big or too difficult. But Mueller prayed...and pressed on. He did both. He relied on God and got up and did the work. He can teach us today if we would pay attention. And that's really the application for us.....

Application.

Muller saw the needs of his time and made a priority list for the situation. Needs of knowledge and distribution of God's word – a distressing doubt within the church and an epidemic of orphans. He took those issues and did what we all should be doing – he prayed and relied on the Holy Spirit to lead....while he got up and went to the meetings at church, while he made meetings to talk with property owners, while he signed agreements, purchased equipment, and – etc., etc. I do see our church struggling with doubt also – it's a normal part of faith, but I also see and hear statements of "I want to pray and wait upon God" applied to literally! And allow me to mix in the reality of our youth. Our younger generation swims within a flood water of ideology that tells them God is a very old, made up, flawed system – we need to be praying against the unbelief of God in our culture. We need to be like Mueller here – and pray like crazy, trusting God will do a work. And then, when the Amen is said, we need to be like Mueller and get up and do the work. We need to develop relationship with all our generations. Mueller would not have just prayed about the needs of the youth of our culture if he were alive today. He would have prayed and then set up times to meet, prayed and talked to others about what they can do, prayed help develop and provide resources to meet with the needs so that "large and liberal things" would be created for the glory of God. I know Pastor Randy is working through a great book by Tony Evens called "Kingdom Man". Mueller was indeed a kingdom man and as Tony points out in his book, we need to be men who lead the next generation in faith. So true, but obviously not just the men – all of us need to lead the next generation in faith as best we can. We need to do this intentionally and strategically, not getting tunnel vision and only looking at a few. Our entire generation needs guidance and we need to pray like crazy, then get up and disciple our generation in the ways we have available to us.

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- ⁱ Arthur T. Pierson, *George Mueller of Bristol and His Witness to A Prayer-Hearing God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 1999), 248. Originally published as "Authorized Memoir" (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1899).
- ⁱⁱ *The Autobiography of George Müller* (Springdale, Pennsylvania: Whitaker House, 1984), ISBN 0-88368-159-5, p.33
- ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.georgemuller.org/uploads/4/8/6/5/48652749/the-autobiography-of-george-muller.pdf>, pg 5
- ^{iv} <http://www.georgemuller.org/uploads/4/8/6/5/48652749/the-autobiography-of-george-muller.pdf> Pg. 5-6
- ^v George Mueller Documentary, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yf30wjrgzM8> 6:39
- ^{vi} Piper, 2004
- ^{vii} *The Autobiography of George Müller* (Springdale, Pennsylvania: Whitaker House, 1984), ISBN 0-88368-159-5, p.14-15
- ^{viii} Piper, John Bethlehem Conference for Pastors, George Mueller's Strategy for Showing God, Feb 3, 2004
- ¹⁴ Piper, 2004 – Muller Narrative 2003 1:80-81
- ¹³ Piper, 2004 – Muller Narrative 2003 1:252
- ^{ix} <http://www.georgemuller.org/uploads/4/8/6/5/48652749/the-autobiography-of-george-muller.pdf> pg. 8
- ^x George Mueller Documentary, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yf30wjrgzM8> 23:40
- ^{xi} <http://www.georgemuller.org/uploads/4/8/6/5/48652749/the-autobiography-of-george-muller.pdf> pg. 13
- ^{xii} George Mueller Documentary, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yf30wjrgzM8> 13:25
- ¹⁵ Piper, 2004 – Muller Narrative 2003 2:365-375
- ¹⁶ Piper, 2004 – Muller Narrative 2003 2:314
- ¹⁷ Piper, 2004 - Pierson, *George Mueller*, 274.
- ¹⁸ Piper, 2004 - Pierson, *George Mueller*, 274.
- ¹⁹ Piper, 2004 - Pierson, *George Mueller*, 305.
- ²⁰ Piper, 2004 *George Mueller, Autobiography of George Mueller, or A Million and a Half in Answer to Prayer*, compiled by G. Fred Bergin (Denton, Tex.: Westminster Literature Resources, 2003), ix.
- ²¹ Piper, 2004 - Pierson, *George Mueller*, 305.
- ²² Piper, 2004 - Pierson, *George Mueller*, 257.
- ²⁵ Piper, 2004 - Pierson, *George Mueller*, 286-286.
- ²⁶ Piper, 2004 - Pierson, *George Mueller*, 286.
- ²⁷ Piper, 2004 – Muller Narrative 2003 2:834
- ^{xiv} Piper, 2004
- ^{xv} Piper, 2004
- ²⁹ Piper, 2004 – Muller Narrative 2003 2:291
- ³⁰ Piper, 2004 – Muller Narrative 2003 2:389-401
- ³¹ Piper, 2004 - Pierson, *George Mueller*, 279.
- ^{xvi} George Mueller Documentary, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yf30wjrgzM8> 23:03
- ³⁹ Mueller, Narrative, 1:105
- ^{xvii} George Mueller Documentary, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yf30wjrgzM8> 55:33
- ^{xviii} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_M%C3%BCller#cite_note-39
- ^{xix} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_M%C3%BCller#cite_note-43
- ^{xx} <https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/church-history-for-kids/george-mueller-orphanages-built-by-prayer-11634869.html>
- ^{xxi} *George Mueller, A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealing with George Muller, Written by Himself, Jehovah Magnified. Addresses by George Muller Complete and Unabridged*, 2 vols. (Muskegon, Mich.: Dust and Ashes, 2003),