

## Lives Worth Imitating - George Muller

### July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**Hebrews 13:7-8 (NIV)** *Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

If Jesus doesn't change, then that means He is still the God who works out His plans in history, and one of the ways he does that is by giving us examples, throughout history, of men and women who have lived great lives of faith that we can learn from. That's why we're in this preaching series in which we're examining the lives of men and women of faith down through history so that we might be inspired, encouraged and equipped by the examples of their lives.

Two chapters earlier, we are given a whole chapter of people in the Bible who were great examples of faith to follow. And part way through this Hall of Fame of Faith, the writer gives us this verse:

**Hebrews 11:6 (NIV)** *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

Our person of faith today was a living breathing example of this principle. He believed it and lived by it and has served as an inspiration to many Christians over the past two hundred years.

The person of faith we're going to look at today is George Mueller.

Let me quick run through a few inspirational details of his life and then jump into some principles by which he lived his life that can hopefully be instructional for us as well.

- George Mueller was born September 27, 1805 in Germany and died at age 92 on March 10, 1898. That means that he was contemporaries with such faith heroes as Charles Spurgeon, Hudson Taylor and Dwight L. Moody.
- In his writings, George talks extensively about what a horrible sinner he was growing up. He wrote 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. At one point, he stayed in several different hotels, charging up outrageous bills and then would skip out on the bill. However, one time he was caught by the police and thrown in jail and spent about a month there before his dad bailed him out.
- His dad sent him off to Bible college with the hopes that it would curb his sinning and that he'd go into the ministry, which was a steady good paying job and thus would provide George the financial means by which to care for his father in his later years.
- However, even while at Bible college, George continued his wild living. He would often steal or swindle money from fellow Bible college students to finance his wild adventures. He writes that, "I had now grown so wicked, that I could habitually tell lies without blushing." Several times he tried to reform his life, because he could see that his future with this type of living was not going to be good. But he failed repeatedly in trying to reform his life.
- One day he was invited to attend a home Bible study and it was during this time when God began to get ahold of his heart. He claims that this home Bible study was the turning point of his life. God, through His Spirit, began to change his heart and draw him towards Himself. He still struggled with sin for awhile, but his heart was being drawn deeper and deeper into a relationship with God.
- Early on, he felt a strong desire to become a missionary but in order to enter mission training school he needed the permission of his father. Upon telling his father that he wanted to become a missionary, his father became outraged and disowned his son. Why? Primarily because a missionaries life was not a lucrative life, which meant he wouldn't have the financial means to support his father later in life. Because of his father's refusal to support him George's desire to become a missionary didn't pan out, at that time.
- Muller became the pastor of a church in Bristol, England and served there for 66 years.
- One of the things Muller is perhaps best known for is his work with orphans in England. At that time orphans were not treated well and were often thrown into workhouses with the mentally ill and violent adults to work for their room and board. Muller's heart became broken over them and was

led by God to work on their behalf. Over the years, Muller built 5 orphan houses and cared for 10,024 orphans.

- At age 70, Muller finally got his chance to become a missionary and for the next 17 years he traveled to 42 countries, preaching on average of once a day and preached to some 3 million people. All from the age of 70 to 87 years old.
- He was married twice, to Mary Groves for 39 years and then she died. To Susannah Sangar for 23 years. She passed away 3 years before he died. He certainly knew tragedy in his life. Mary bore him 4 children. Two were still born and his one son, Elijah, died when he was only a year old. And so, Muller, while richly blessed and used by God, was not unaware of sorrows. But in the midst of these heartbreaks, he continued to keep his focus on God and His goodness and faithfulness.
- One of the things George Muller is perhaps best known for was that in all his years of the preaching ministry and working with the orphans he never asked anyone for financial support. This began early on in his ministry. Within a month of marrying Mary, they prayerfully determined that they needed to trust God for everything. So, they sold virtually everything they had, including their savings accounts and donated it to the poor. George quit taking a salary from the church and changed from taking an offering every week to putting a donation box in the back of the church and invited people that if the Lord led them to give then to give. He carried that same approach into his work with the orphans. He never asked for money, and yet during his ministry over 10 million dollars were given to support him and the ministry. In his journals he records over 50,000 specific answers to prayer during his lifetime.

### Examples of answered prayers:

- The orphanage was without any money or food one morning, and did not know where the food was going to come from for the breakfast the children needed to eat. Muller was not fazed, but brought this before God in prayer. With the 300 children lined up to receive their breakfast, as they did every morning, Muller prayed and thanked God for the food they were about to eat, though nothing was in the cupboards or in the serving bins for the children to eat. Upon finishing his prayer, there was a knock at the door and the local baker was standing on the other side. It seems the baker had a dream the night before where God told him to give the orphan house a bunch of bread, so the baker got out of bed at 2am, baked the bread and was there to deliver enough bread for orphanage for the rest of the week. Further, a milk truck had just broken down in front of the orphanage, and the milk man was forced to give all his supply so that it would not spoil before he could get his truck fixed.
- Another time, while crossing the Atlantic in August 1877 for a speaking engagement, 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 Muller prayed a very simple prayer, the captain started to pray, but Muller stopped him; partly because of the captain's unbelief, but mainly because he believed the prayer had already been answered. Muller 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 Muller was able to keep his appointment. The captain became a Christian shortly afterwards.

Summarizing his life in ministry Muller said, "The primary object I had in view in carrying on this work was that it might be seen that now, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, God is still the Living God and that now, as well as thousands of years ago, He listens to the prayers of His children and helps those who trust in Him."

That's an amazing life, but George's purpose in this was to convince all Christians that he's no one special, but merely a sinner saved by God's grace and that God wants to do this for every Christian.

I want to be a powerful prayer warrior like George Muller was. So, let's look at what made him so powerful through prayer and principles we can put into practice in our lives as well.

## George Muller's Foundational Principles for Prayer:

### 1. Recognize your need for God.

This takes us back to the Lord's Prayer when Jesus prayed: "*Father, give us this day our daily bread.*" Coming out of a life of continual sinning, George realized that the only way he came to the Lord was through God's Spirit graciously working to change his heart and that led him to fully embrace God's goodness to His children. What can you provide for without God's help? We too often make God a God of emergencies. I'll reserve my prayers for times when I can't do it myself. The problem with that approach is that you're in charge of your life rather than God. God desires absolute dependence upon Him for our very lives.

Muller wrote in his journal concerning the orphan houses that "*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 anyone being asked by me or my fellow laborers whereby it may be seen, that God is faithful still, and hears prayers still.*"

Muller wrote that the trials of life were but intersections to turn our hearts to God. Muller firmly believed that not all people are called to give up all their possessions or to run an orphanage, yet all people are called to **trust God for great things.**

### 2. Have Faith in God Alone

Often Muller would say that when he was faced with great need he wasn't focused on the little in hand, but on the fullness of God. It was faith that gave Muller the eyes to see God at work, even before his provision began because the issue was not what the provision would be, but who the provision would come from.

### 3. Daily study of God's Word

During his lifetime, Muller read through God's Word at least **200 times.** And he didn't just read through it, he studied it and meditated on it and memorized it. He especially made note of the many promises of God recorded in Scripture and would pray those back to God claiming them.

For instance he read **Psalm 68:5** that God was "*a father to the fatherless.*" And **Psalm 9:10** "*They that know Thy name will put their trust in You.*" This led Muller to write in his journal; "*By the help of God, this shall be my argument before Him, respecting the orphans, in the hour of need. He is their Father, and therefore has pledged Himself, as it were, to provide for them; and I have only to remind Him of the need of these poor children in order to have it supplied.*"

### 4. Commitment to prayer

#### a. Total delight in God

During a message Muller stated, "*According to my judgment the most important point to be attended to is this: above all things see to it that your souls are happy in the Lord. Other things may press upon you, the Lord's work may even have urgent claims upon your attention, but I deliberately repeat, it is of supreme and paramount importance that you should seek above all things to have your souls truly happy in God Himself! Day by day seek to make this the most important business of your life. The secret of all true effectual service is joy in God, having experimental acquaintance and fellowship with God Himself. ...This happiness is to be obtained through the study of the Holy Scriptures. God has therein revealed Himself unto us in the face of Jesus Christ. "*

#### b. Turn your back on all sin in your life

*Psalms 66:18-19 (NIV) If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and has heard my prayer.*

#### c. Ask according to God's will, not selfish motives

James 4:2-3 (NIV) *You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*

#### **But how do I know what God's will is?**

Romans 12:1-2 (NIV) *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. **Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.***

#### **d. Pray specifically**

- An orphan house boiler stopped working; so he prayed for two things. **First**, that the workers he 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.

Sometimes our prayers are so general that we wouldn't know if God answered them or not.

#### **5. In everything glorify God**

George Muller's objective was never to show off what a powerful prayer warrior he was or what a great builder and organizer of orphan houses he was. His objective in everything was that God might be glorified. That everyone might be blown away by God's goodness and mercy and love and generosity to those who love Him.

***Lives Worth Imitating Sermon Notes***  
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