

# Undertaking Greater Things for God

by George Mueller

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*George Muller emphasizes the power of prayer and faith in undertaking greater works for God, particularly in caring for orphans.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 37:4, Matthew 7:7, Matthew 19:26, Mark 11:24, Ephesians 3:20, Philippians 4:19, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Hebrews 11:1, James 1:5, 1 John 5:14-15

**Topics:** "Faith", "Prayer"

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## Description

George Muller shares his unwavering faith in God as he undertakes the monumental task of caring for orphans, expanding his orphanage from 1,150 to 2,000 children. He emphasizes the power of prayer, detailing how he sought God's provision for every need, from daily sustenance to the construction of new houses. Despite facing significant financial challenges, Muller remained steadfast, believing that God would supply all necessary resources in His perfect timing. His life serves as a testament to the faithfulness of God and the importance of trusting Him for greater things. Ultimately, Muller's work not only provided homes for orphans but also inspired countless others to believe in the power of prayer and faith in God.

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## Transcript

MR. MULLER desired to witness further for Christ. When he had housed 1,150 orphans, he wanted the world to know that God was able to supply the necessary funds to care for 2,000. This became his prayer goal, and no sooner had the children moved into House No. 3 than he dreamed of two more plants -- dreams gradually to come to pass.

For four years between moving into the more recently constructed houses and the commencement of House No. 4, Mr. Muller prayed constantly that God would supply the money for the new building. During those times it was necessary to beseech God for daily food. But the God of Elijah was also the God of Muller, Who heard His child cry for sustenance.

In little matters as well as large he took his petitions to the Lord. When workers were hard to find, or proved unsuitable, Mr. Muller asked God to furnish the right ones. We find him saying, "Instead of praying once a day about this matter, as we had been doing day by day for years, we met daily three times, to bring this before God."

There was no detail too insignificant to take to the Lord in prayer. He lived literally according to the passage, "In all things by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." He looked to the heavenly Father for food, shelter, for suited teachers and assistants, which were matters of great import. But when details called for attention, they were also subjects of prayer. For example, it became hard to find suited places for the older boys to work during the summer of 1862, so Muller carried this petition to the Father's throne.

"We had several boys ready to be apprenticed, but there were no applications made by masters for apprentices...If all other difficulties were out of the way, the master must also be willing to receive the apprentice into his own family. Under these circumstances, we again gave ourselves to prayer, as we had done for more than twenty years before, concerning this thing...We remembered how good the Lord has been to us in having helped us hundreds of times before in this matter...The difficulty was entirely overcome by prayer, as everyone of the boys, whom it was desirable to send out, has been sent out."

In spite of the daily care for the homes, with their various problems, Mr. Muller never let up in his prayers that God would make it possible for the work to be enlarged. Each week new applications for entrance were coming in. He could not easily say, "There is no more room," when he remembered that during the many years since he first rented the House on Wilson Street, God had enabled him to build larger quarters as the need arose.

The longed-for enlargement of the work would cost at least £50,000, and would increase the current expense fund from \$100,000 to \$175,000 a year. "But my hope," Mr. Muller said, "is in God, and in Him alone. I am not a fanatic or enthusiast, but, as all who know me are well aware, a calm, cool, quiet, calculating business man; and therefore I should be utterly overwhelmed, looking at it naturally. But as the whole of this work was commenced, and ever has been gone on with, in faith...so it is also regarding this enlargement. I look to the Lord alone for helpers, land, means and everything else needed. I have pondered the difficulties for months and have looked steadily at every one of them, but faith in God has put them aside."

Children cried for admission and Muller believed that "the Father of the fatherless" would not turn a deaf ear to his prayer to shelter them. He was again moved with the idea of proving more fully to the world that "the living God is still, as found a thousand years ago, the Living God."

Hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world had heard of his work, and many of them had their faith strengthened to undertake greater things in the name of the Living God, because Mr. Muller had shown them that God was able. He desired supremely that God might be honored and souls brought into the kingdom. When his faith became certain that the new step was willed of God, he decided to go forward at once.

"Many and great may be the difficulties," says Mr. Muller. "Thousands and tens of thousands of prayers may have to ascend to God before the full answer is obtained; much exercise of faith and patience may be required; but in the end it will again be seen that His servant, who trusted in Him, has not been confounded."

The first donations for House No. 5 arrived before they had moved into House No. 4, and consisted of 5 rupees, 6 annas, 3 senams, 3 Spanish coins, and 3 other silver coins. This was on June 6, 1861, and a month later he found a check for £2,000 at his house from a friend, who was "thankful to God for the privilege of being a fellow helper in the work of caring for the orphans."

In the following January two other large donations of approximately \$20,000 arrived, which, as with even the smallest gift, Mr. Muller received as coming in answer to his prayers. "Every donation," he observes, "brings me nearer the contemplated enlargement."

Slowly did the gifts come in during the first year or so, but his faith was unwavering in the fact that God, in His own good time, would supply all the necessary funds. "I continue in believing prayer," he states at a time when gifts had been small. "I have not been allowed to have a shadow of doubt as to whether God can and will give me the means; but day by day, in the full assurance of faith, I renew my requests before God; and generally day by day the amount of the building fund is...increased. I then give thanks and ask for more."

On October 3, when a seasonal gift of £5,000 arrived from a friend who did not wish his name to be made known, the fund amounted to £27,000, and Mr. Muller's faith led him to look for a suited plot of ground for the new building enterprise.

Across the road from the present buildings were 18 acres of land, for which he had been praying. "My eyes," he states, "had been for years

directed to a beautiful piece of land...Hundreds of times had I prayed, within recent years, that God would count me worthy to be allowed to erect on this ground two more Orphan Houses...I might have bought it years ago, but that would have been going before the Lord. I had money enough in hand to have paid for it, but I desired patiently, submissively, to wait God's own time, and for Him to mark it clearly and distinctly that His time was come."

The price was staggeringly high throughout the years, but when God was ready for Mr. Muller to take this new leap of faith the owner sold the land for \$7,500 less than he originally asked.

In March, 1866, with a building fund of £34,002, 2s. on hand, Mr. Muller found that construction prices had risen, and it would take approximately £7,000 more to finish the work than he had estimated. This handicap he found to be of the Lord, for on deeper study and prayer, he decided it would be better to build two houses than one. So he let the contract for House No. 4.

Concerning this change in plans he wrote, "I will not sign contracts, which I had not money in hand to meet. Should it be said...'God has not money enough to pay for His own work'...If it shall please the Lord, by January 1, 1867, to give me about £7,000 more than I now have on hand, the contract for No. 5 will be signed."

It is gratifying to know that God supplied the money by the above-stated time, and the contract was duly let. This was an hour of thanksgiving to God, for "thousands of times," he affirms, "I have asked the Lord for the means for building these two houses, and now I have to the full received the answer."

The contract price for the two buildings was £41,147, or \$205,735, which Mr. Muller had prayed in, plus an additional \$100,000 to care for the current expenses yearly during the five years since the first gift for the new buildings arrived. This made a total of approximately three-quarters of a million dollars in five years which this man's prayers brought into the coffers of God's kingdom for the sole purpose of caring for orphans.

As on previous occasions the window glass was donated for the new houses. It required ten thousand pounds to furnish the buildings, which also came as the result of Muller's prayers. In February, 1868, he

announced that all necessary funds were in hand. After waiting on God daily, and often several times a day, for nearly seven years the end of his prayer came at last, and Mr. Muller gave himself to thanksgiving and praise to the Lord for once again "filling his mouth" after he had opened it wider than ever before. The total sum required for the two buildings reached the staggering amount of fifty-eight thousand pounds.

House No. 4 was opened on November 5, 1868, and two years later on January 6, 1870, the long-prayed-for day arrived when the last house, No. 5, was thrown open to occupancy.

It required an immense amount of labor to transfer children from one house to another, to fill in vacancies, and to select from the hundreds of applications the children whom Mr. Muller decided to be the most suited and the most in need to fill the houses to overflowing.

Mr. Muller declared, "In the mighty monument of prayer raised there was afforded not merely a Christian home for 2,050 destitute orphan children -- great indeed as that was -- but a supreme and striking object lesson in simple, child-like faith, a signal evidence of Christ's power and love, sufficient to make men pause, and wonder, and inquire, and -- God grant it more and more -- believe."

"Thus have been gathered," writes A. T. Pierson, "the facts about the erection of this great monument to a prayer-hearing God on Ashley Down, though the work of building covered so many years. Between the first decision to build, in 1845, and the opening of the third house, in 1862, nearly seventeen years had elapsed, and before No. 5 was opened, in 1870, twenty-five. The work was one in its plan and purpose. At each new stage it supplies only a wider application and illustration of the same laws of life and conduct, as, from the outset of the work in Bristol, had with growing power controlled George Muller.

"His supreme aim was the glory of God; his sole resort, believing prayer; his one trusted oracle, the inspired Word; his one divine Teacher, the Holy Spirit. One step taken in faith and prayer had prepared for another; one act of trust had made him bolder to venture upon another, implying a greater apparent risk and therefore demanding more implicit trust."

Answered prayer was rewarded faith. New risks undertaken only proved there was no risk at all in confidently leaning upon the strong arm of the Almighty.

The buildings impressed one with their spaciousness, seventeen hundred windows in all, and accommodations for more than two thousand people. They were substantial, made of stone and built for permanency. While scrupulously plain, they were still excellent examples of construction whose end is utility rather than beauty. In building them Muller's rule was economy. This went to the smallest items, even the furniture being unpretentious. There is little or no embellishment.

Mr. Muller subordinated everything to the one purpose of demonstrating the fact that God still hears prayer. He felt that he was a public steward of God's property and he hesitated to spend even a penny needlessly. He made the buildings plain for he felt that the orphans would be put into service in similar surroundings. He studied to promote health and education and to school the orphans to be content with the necessities, and not the luxuries, of life.

Cleanness, neatness and method everywhere was in evidence about the buildings and the grounds. The tracts of land, adjoining the buildings, were set apart as gardens, where the boys found their work and exercise. Throughout the houses care was exhibited in arrangement. Each child had a square and numbered compartment for clothes. The boys had each three suits and the girls five dresses.

Mr. Muller, with so large a family to oversee, laid out the daily life with regularity, and demanded that everything be conducted with the punctuality of a clock. The children got up at six and at seven were ready for their pre-breakfast duties. Breakfast was at eight, followed with a half-hour for service before school opened at ten. Dinner at one led up to an afternoon of school work, followed by an hour and a half of outdoor exercise, and then the six o'clock meal. Mr. Muller asked God for simple food, yet nutritious, such as bread, oatmeal, milk, soups, rice, meat and vegetables.

When the Orphan Houses were finally filled, Mr. Muller sought one end. "We aim at this," he observes, "that if any of them do not turn out well, temporally or spiritually, and do not become useful members of society, it shall not at least be our fault."

There was a steady increase in expenses demanded by the larger family of orphans cared for, but Mr. Muller's faith was sufficiently strong in the Lord to keep the supplies on hand.

On May 26, 1861, he writes, "At the close of the period I find that the total expenditure for all the various objects was £24,700 16s. 4d., or £67 13s. 5 3/4d. per day, all the year around. During the coming year I expect the expenses to be considerably greater. But God, Who has helped me these many years, will, I believe, help me in the future also. You see, esteemed reader, how the Lord, in His faithful love helped us year after year...He never failed us."

Under date of October 21, 1868, he enters in his diary, "As the days come, we make known our requests to Him, for our outgoings have now been for several years at the rate of more than one hundred pounds each day; but though the expenses have been so great, He has never failed us."

Year by year this increase of needs followed by God's graciously supplying them is noted in his Journal. Writing on July 28, 1874, he says, "It had for months appeared to me, as if the Lord meant...to bring us back to the state of things in which we were for more than ten years, from August, 1838, until April, 1849, when we had day by day, almost without interruption, to look to Him for our daily supplies, and for a great part of the time, from meal to meal. The difficulties appeared to me indeed very great, as the Institution is now twenty times larger than it was then, and our purchases are to be made in a wholesale way; but I am comforted by the knowledge that God is aware of all this . . .

"The funds were thus expended; but God, our infinitely rich Treasurer, remains to us. It is this which gives me peace. Moreover, if it pleases him, with a work requiring about £44,000 a year, to make me do again at the evening of my life, what I did from August, 1838, to April, 1849, I am not only prepared for it, but gladly again I would pass through all these trials of faith...if He only might be glorified and His church and the world be benefited.

"Often and often this last point has of late passed through my mind and I have placed myself in the position of having no means at all left, and two thousand and one hundred persons not only daily at the table, but with everything else to be provided for, and all funds gone; 189 missionaries to be assisted, and nothing whatever left; about one hundred schools, with about nine thousand scholars in them, to be entirely supported, and no means for them in hand; about four millions of tracts and tens of thousands of copies of the Holy Scriptures yearly now to be sent out, and all the money expended.

"Invariably, however,...I have said to myself: 'God Who raised up this work through me, God Who has led me generally year after year to enlarge it, God Who has supported this work now for more than forty years, will still help...and He will provide me with what I need in the future also . . .!'"

On the following day, to show how God honored Muller's trust, he received £217 up until early afternoon. "We thanked God for it," he says, triumphant in his faith, "and asked for more. When the meeting for prayer was over, there was handed me a letter from Scotland, containing £73 17s. 10d., and a paper with 13s. This was the immediate answer to prayer for more means."

On August 12 of that year he states his income for the week to have been more than £897. On September 16, he writes, "Just after having again prayed for the payment of legacies...I had a legacy receipt sent for the payment of a legacy of £1,800." A week later he enters this item in his

Journal. "Income today £5,365 13s. 6d.," all of which except approximately £32 came in one donation -- "The Lord be praised."

During those faith-trying times Mr. Muller had a faithful wife who bore his burdens with him. Side by side they prayed for many years, faith together taking hold of God's promises. But Mrs. Muller was not permitted to remain by her husband's side till the end. She lived just a month after opening the Fifth Orphan House. Concerning this Mr. Muller writes:

"Feb. 6, 1870. On Oct. 7, 1830 (therefore 39 years and four months since) the Lord gave me my most valuable, lovely and holy wife. Her value to me and the blessing God made her to be to me is beyond description. This blessing was continued to me till this day, when, in the afternoon, about four o'clock, the Lord took her to himself."

The funeral was on February 11, when many thousands of persons were in attendance. About 1,200 of the orphans who were able to walk followed the procession and hundreds of beloved fellow Christians walked with the group. "I myself," he says, "sustained by the Lord to the utmost, performed the service in the chapel, in the cemetery, etc. Shortly after the funeral I was very unwell, but as soon as I was sufficiently recovered I preached my late dear wife's funeral sermon."

In this sermon, preached from the text, "Thou art good, and doest good" (Psalms 119:68), he drew a picture of a sweet and simple life, made dearer through holy service. He described his wife as "the mother of the orphans."

"Every day," he said in the funeral sermon, "I miss; her more and more. Every day I see more and more how great is her loss to the orphans. Yet, without an effort, my inmost soul habitually joys in the joy of the loved departed one...God alone has done it, we are satisfied with Him."

In three divisions he dealt with the text: "The Lord was good and did good: first, in giving her to me; second, in so long leaving her with me; and third, in taking her from me."

Sixteen months after Mrs. Muller's death, on November 16, 1871, Mr. James Wright married Mr. Muller's daughter, and was designated as his successor in case of the founder's death. When Mr. Wright accepted this responsibility, Mr. Muller wrote:

"By the Lord's kindness I am able to work as heretofore...yet, as I am sixty-six years of age, I cannot conceal from myself that it is of great importance for the work that I should obtain a measure of relief...On this account, I have therefore not only appointed Mr. Wright as my successor, in the event of my death, but have also associated him at present with me in the direction of the Institution."

This man of faith through storm and stress still rejoiced in the Lord, for when he closed the year of his wife's death, he affirms, "Though the current expenses of the Institution were far greater during the past year than during any of the previous thirty-five years, yet we abounded more than ever."

Mr. Muller grew restless in contemplation of his daughter's marriage, and felt his lonely condition keenly. He realized the need of someone to share his toils and prayers, and help in the Lord's work. The persuasion grew upon him that he should remarry. After much prayer he determined to ask Miss Susannah Grace Sangar to become his wife, having known her for more than twenty-five years, and believing her to be well fitted to be his helper in the Lord.

They were married fourteen days after his daughter's marriage to Mr. Wright. The second wife was of one mind concerning the stewardship of the Lord's property. They were to live together for more than twenty-three years, and when God took his second wife home, Mr. Muller again preached the funeral sermon. For eight years after the death of his first wife Mr. Muller could not understand God's purpose in her death, but time showed him that "All things work together for good to them that love the Lord."

For Mr. Muller was about to commence the most strenuous years of his career. God wanted the story of faith to be carried to other lands, and in the person of Mr. Wright he furnished a man upon whose shoulders should rest the responsibility of caring for the home, while Mr. Muller traveled throughout the world with his message of trust.

"All at once, while in the midst of these fatiguing journeys and exposures to varying climates, it flashed upon Mr. Muller that his first wife, who had died in her seventy-third year, could never have undertaken these tours, and that the Lord had thus, in taking her, left him free to make these extensive journeys. She would have been over fourscore years old when these tours began...whereas, the second Mrs. Muller, who, at that time, was not yet fifty seven, was both by her age and strength fully equal to the strain thus put upon her," writes A. T. Pierson, who was personally acquainted with the second Mrs. Muller.

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