

George Muellers Strategy for Showing God

by John Piper

This sermon is about the life and faith of George Mueller, emphasizing the importance of being satisfied in God, finding joy in Him through the study of the Scriptures, and how this joy leads to glad self-denial, sacrificial love, and risk-taking for the kingdom. Mueller's life exemplified a deep trust in God's sovereignty, seen in his prayerful reliance on God for all needs, especially in his work with orphans. His strategy for fighting for joy involved seeing God in the Bible, being satisfied in Him, and being set free for sacrificial love. The sermon concludes with a plea for listeners to experience the preciousness and happiness of casting all cares upon God, just as Mueller did.

Scripture: Psalm 55:22, Philippians 4:19, Hebrews 13:5, Matthew 6:33, Psalm 84:11

Description

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Transcript

Three preliminary comments before we get into Mueller's life. One, this manuscript from which I'll be working will, God willing, be online for you to download on Monday. So you don't need to scramble to write down juicy quotes or anything like that from Mueller, because it'll all be there for you to have along with its 80 footnotes so that you can actually go to the books, and when you quote things, prove that I didn't make it up.

That's number one. Number two, as I was reflecting, having heard now three messages already in this conference, why God might have appointed for us to put Mueller here a year or so ago when we thought about it, is this, Mueller not only will be an embodiment of what you have heard in the three messages, but he will also be an embodiment with a certain flavor that I don't think is typical of the way money is often talked about, or the way Calvinism is often portrayed, and I'll save that for you. But I think Mueller is unusual, and not for the reason many people think he is.

The third comment is on sources. I think we have lots of these in the bookstore, and these are the two books to which I would send you. I'm aware of no authoritative scholarly biography on George Mueller that attempts to put him in his religious, and social, and cultural milieu with serious attention in detail to his own writings with careful documentation.

I'm not aware of anything like that exists. Therefore, if you want to do serious study of what he really thought, there aren't any biographies that will do it. This may be the closest one that's in print.

This is George Mueller of Bristol, A.T. Pearson, and we have those, and I profited from this. I think Pearson gets him right as far as his character goes, but neither this nor any biography I'm aware of understands or is willing to share his theology. Therefore, go to this one.

This is a condensation of much of what he wrote, and it's called his autobiography. It's just newly reprinted. I wrote a little blurb on the back.

So if I were to choose to have one book in my library dealing with Mueller, this is the one I would get. So I'll put that there, and I hope you'll deplete all those books in the bookstore, and take one of those home with you. You'll be able to find almost everything I have here there.

Although, most of my quotes come from a two-volume work that I didn't encourage the bookstore to get, because I just thought it's mainly boring, because it's a publication of his annual reports, and it's just page after page of five pounds here, and three pence there, and 10 pounds here, and three pence there. I just, this is so boring. But amidst all the boring are really juicy quotes, and they're in here.

So I got them from there. So my footnotes aren't going to get you there. So just, you'll find them.

Or if you really want to do, you can find online Dustin Nash's publications, newly reprinted his entire narrative with all of his annual reports. Those are my three preliminary comments. George Mueller was a native of Germany.

He's a German, a Prussian. He was born in Koppenstadt, September 27, 1805, and he lived almost the entire 19th century. He died in 1898 at the age of 92.

He saw the Great Awakening in 1859, about which he said, it led to the conversion of hundreds of thousands of people. He did follow-up work for D.L. Moody. He preached for Charles Spurgeon in his tabernacle, and he clearly and explicitly was the inspiration of Hudson Taylor's way of doing missions.

So that's some of his connectedness in the 19th century. He spent almost all of his life in Bristol, England. Pastored the same church there for over 66 years.

A kind of independent, premillennial, Calvinistic Baptist church that celebrated the Lord's Supper every Sunday and admitted into membership non-baptized people. Now, if that sounds unconventional to you, that's accurate. In fact, it would not be wrong to say that... I'm going to call him Hudson Taylor, I'm afraid.

Mueller was eccentric. And not just in his ecclesiology, but in almost everything he did. He was eccentric and unconventional.

But A.T. Pearson is right, I think, to put a very positive spin on that by pointing out that almost all of his eccentricities, maybe all of them, resulted in large-hearted, outward-directed ventures. His eccentricities were not like most of our eccentricities, sort of ingrown and peculiar about us. His were all creative and

outward.

So, Pearson said, he devised large and liberal things for the Lord's cause. I really like that phrase. He devised large and liberal things for the Lord's cause.

1834, so he's 29 years old, actually 28, he founded the Scripture Knowledge Institute for Home and Abroad. It had five, what he called objects, we'd call them ministries, which sprung out from his church. The reason he invented a new mission and left the LMS, the London Missionary Society, is because of his disillusionment with post-millennialism, liberalism, and worldly strategies like going into debt, which he never did and thought was unbiblical, both to buy a house or anything else.

His five ministries, besides the church, were schools for children and adults, two, Bible distribution, three, missionary support, he was a great supporter of Hudson Taylor, four, tract and book distribution, and the most famous one, number five, in his words, to board and clothe and scripturally educate destitute children who have lost both parents by death. He would not admit all orphans. That's a pretty narrow definition of orphan, but that was his working definition.

He wouldn't even admit children born out of wedlock. He was eccentric in almost everything he did. His accomplishments in all five of these ministries were really remarkable.

I'll have a long footnote. I won't read documenting the statistics. The most famous one that you're all aware of is his orphan ministry.

He built, over the years, five large orphan houses, very large. Altogether, they would hold over 2,000 children. Over his lifetime, he cared for 10,024 orphans.

When he started in 1834, there were accommodation in all of Britain for 3,600 orphans. There were twice that many children, under eight, in prison in 1834 in England. And by the time he was done with his life of ministering to orphans, by virtue of the inspiration he became to other people for ministry, there were, let me get my statistics right here now, at least 100,000 orphans being cared for in homes in England when he died, as opposed to 3,600 when he began.

He did all of this while preaching every Sunday when he was in town at his church. From 1830 to 1898, that was his tenure as pastor. Probably 10,000 times he preached to his own people.

When he turned 70, he fulfilled a life dream because he had belonged to the London Missionary Society and hoped to be a missionary and fell out of favor with them because of some of his ecclesiological and theological eccentricities and never became a missionary. But when he turned 70, he fulfilled a dream. And for the next 17 years, I love this, until he was 87, he traveled the world to 42 countries preaching on an average of once a day to over 3 million people.

Nine times he preached in Minneapolis in 1880, nine years after the founding of my church. I like that statistic. I wish I knew.

I'm standing in the very place, you know, of his preaching in Minneapolis in 1880. So, when you turn 70, Randy, talk to us about this tonight. Talk to us about retirement.

Talk to us about funds and insurance and golf and shell collecting. And you've read the book, that's good. Or listened to the tape.

From the end of his travels then, so he's 87, 1892, till he died in 1898, he preached again in his home church and he worked with the orphans and the Scripture Knowledge Institute until he died at age 92. And he said when he was 92, not long before he died, I have been able every day and all day to work and that with ease as 70 years since. So, God blessed this man with unusual health almost all of his life.

There were a few seasons where he was laid out, but by and large, this man was incredibly healthy. And I can't help but think the Lord simply delighted in his generosity because he owned nothing and gave everything. The funeral was held the following Monday, died March 9, 1898 on a Wednesday.

And the funeral was held in Bristol. Tens, this is a quote now, tens of thousands of people reverently stood along the route of the 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. This one brought me to tears. A thousand children gathered for a service at Orphan House No.

3. They had now lost their second father. This eccentric pastor and lover of orphans was gone. He had read the Bible end to end almost 200 times.

He had prayed in millions of dollars. I could give you the number in pounds in the 19th century, but I have no idea what that would translate into. One estimate was \$70 million, but that was A.T. Pearson, and he lived simultaneously.

He was a contemporary. Never asked anyone for any money directly. Never took a salary for the last 68 years of his life.

Trusted in God to put it in people's hearts to give what was needed to him and to the thousands of orphans in his care. Never took a loan, never was in debt, and never went hungry, nor did any of his orphans. The eccentric pastor was now gone.

He had been married twice. To Mary Groves when he was 25, and to Susanna Sanger when he was 66. Mary bore him four children.

Two were stillborn. One son, Elijah, died when he was one month old, and his daughter, Lydia, married James Wright, who succeeded Mueller as the head of the orphans, and then she died when she was 57, and he heard about it when he was 85 in India. Five years later, his second wife died, and he preached the funeral sermon for both of his wives.

The last one, when he was 90 years old, and what he said in Mary Groves' funeral message, which is in here in its entirety and worth the price of the whole book, is the key to his life. That's where I'm starting. What he said in the funeral message for Mary, who he had been married to, I think, 39 years, is the key to his life.

Now, to feel the force of what he said, which I'll read some quotes to you from, to feel the force of it, you have to know how much they loved each other, namely, very deeply. Were we happy? Verily, we were. This is in the sermon that he gave to his people a few days after she died.

Were we happy? Verily, we were. With every year, our happiness increased more and more. I never saw my beloved wife at any time when I met her unexpectedly anywhere in Bristol without being delighted so to do.

I never met her even in the orphan houses without my heart being delighted so to do. Day by day, as we met in our dressing room at the orphan houses to wash our hands before dinner and tea, I was delighted to meet her, and she was equally pleased to see me. Thousands of times I told her, my darling, I never saw you at any time since you became my wife without being delighted to see you.

And then came the diagnosis. When I heard what Mr. Pritchard's judgment was, namely that the malady was rheumatic fever, I naturally expected the worst. My heart was nigh to be broken on account of the depth of my affection.

The man who had seen God answer 10,000 prayers in the most remarkable way for the provision of his life and his orphans did not get the answer to this prayer. That his wife be spared, or did he? 20 minutes after four o'clock Lord's Day afternoon, February 6th, 1870, Mary died. I fell on my knees and thanked God for her release and for having taken her to himself and asked the Lord to help and support us, namely him and Lydia.

He recalled later how he strengthened himself in the face of this loss, and this is the paragraph that I'm gonna argue is the key to his life. The last portion which I read to my precious wife was this. The Lord God is a sun and shield.

The Lord gives grace and glory. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. Now, if we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have received grace, we are partakers of grace, and to all such he will also give glory.

I said to myself with regard to the latter part, no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly. I said to myself, I am in myself a poor worthless sinner. But I have been saved by the blood of Christ and I do not live in sin.

I walk uprightly before God. Therefore, if it is really good for me, my darling wife will be raised up again, sick as she is. God will restore her again.

But if she is not restored again, then it would not be good thing for me to have her. And so my heart was at rest. I was satisfied with God.

And all this springs, as I have often said before, from taking God at his word, believing what he says. Now there's a cluster of convictions and experiences that explain everything else in his life. I am a poor sinner in myself.

I have been saved by the blood of Christ. I do not now live in sin. God is sovereign over life and death, my Mary.

If it is good for me and for her, she will be restored again. And if not, she won't. My heart is at rest and I am satisfied with God.

All that from taking God at his word and believing what he says. That's the innermost being of George Mueller's life. The word of God revealing sin, revealing a savior, revealing God's sovereignty, revealing God's goodness, revealing God's promise, awakening faith, satisfying the soul, and we will see, releasing love.

So were his prayers for himself and for his wife answered? Now, to understand how Mueller would answer that question, to understand that, we need to see the way he distinguished between the extraordinary gift of faith and the ordinary grace of faith. It's gonna take a few minutes to work on this. The extraordinary gift, 1 Corinthians 12, nine, of faith, and the ordinary grace of faith.

He constantly insisted that he did not have the gift of faith. Over and over again, I do not have the gift of faith, he wrote. Why did he stress that so heavily? People kept putting him on a pedestal.

They kept saying, Mueller's in a class by himself. As soon as that happened, he knew that his life would be useless for the very point with which he lived, namely to model what all Christians ought to do by trusting Jesus. Think not, dear reader, that I have the gift of faith.

That is, that gift of which we read in 1 Corinthians 12, nine, and which is mentioned along with the gifts of healing and works of miracles, prophecy, that on that account, I am able to trust the Lord. It is true that the faith which I am enabled to exercise is God's gift to me. It is true that He alone supports and that He alone can increase it.

It is true that moment by moment, I depend on Him for my faith, and that if I were only for a moment left to myself, my faith would utterly fail. But it is not true that my faith is that gift of faith which is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12, nine. Now, why is He so adamant about this? Why is He drawing this firm distinction between a God-given grace of faith, which would vanish in a moment if God didn't support it, and this other reality which He totally believes in called the gift of faith along with these other spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12? Well, there's a reason, a very powerful, clear reason that pervades all of His writings and what He spoke.

It's this. Mueller's whole life, especially the orphan work, and especially the way the orphan work was carried out, namely by asking God rather than people for money, was designed to inspire faith in God's people. As soon as people put him in a category of having this unique gift of faith, which not all have, Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 12, they don't have to take his life seriously anymore.

They don't have to check their own unbelief in the promises of God to care for His people, and then his whole purpose for living and for doing the orphan work would fail. That's why he's so adamant. Now, I think the biggest surprise I got in reading the life of Mueller is how pervasive was his insistence that he was not doing orphan work mainly for orphans.

Over and over and over, I have a footnote here, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10 places, I just preserved with an et cetera after them to show you how frequently he came back to insist, I don't care for orphans, mainly for orphans. Well, what then? So let me read a few key things. This was very, very illuminating.

Quote, the chief reasons for establishing an orphan house are, one, that God may be glorified should He be pleased to furnish me with the means in its being seen that it is not in vain to trust Him and that thus the faith of His children may be strengthened. That's number one. Number two, the spiritual welfare of the fatherless and motherless children.

Number three, their temporal welfare, close quote. Now, make no mistake, those three, the strengthening of the faith of the church of Jesus Christ by watching my life and how I care for the orphans, the spiritual welfare of the orphans, the temporal welfare of the orphans, those three in that order was his life. Not the

other way around.

This is really a deep sense of calling on George Mueller. It was absolutely his passion. And I didn't know that until I read his own writings.

He was deeply grieved, quote, that so many believers were harassed and distressed in mind and brought guilt on their consciences on account of not trusting the Lord. He had a deep sense of calling to minister to the church of Jesus Christ around the world by a public display of the trustworthiness of God. This shaped his entire life, this grace that he had to believe the words of God and this grief that he had that so few Christians believed him, trusted him.

Now, here's probably the clearest statement that those three priorities belong in that order. It seemed to me that this goal would best be done by the establishing of an orphan house, namely the goal of presenting the church of Christ with the trustworthiness of God in answering prayers for money rather than asking people for money. He chose the orphans simply, no, I should not say that word.

He uses that word and it makes me mad when he does it. He chose the orphans decisively, crucially to display the trustworthiness of God in answering prayer. So let's read it.

It seemed to me best to be done 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 faith and prayer 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 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 by my fellow laborers whereby it may be seen God is faithful still and hears prayer still. Close quote.

That was his chief passion. That was the unifying aim of Mueller's whole ministry. Live a life and lead a ministry in a way that proves God is real, that shows that God is trustworthy, that God answers prayer, and he built orphanages the way he did it so that Christians would learn to trust God.

He says this over and over again. So, now we can see why he is so adamant that his faith is not the gift of faith in 1 Corinthians 12, nine, like the gift of tongues, which Paul says not all have tongues, and since it's part of that list, you can not all have that gift of faith, and that would be an accurate exegesis. He knew it, believed in that gift, and if he thought that's what people would do, it would ruin the whole aim of his life.

So, he was adamant, I do not have that gift. So, the question becomes, what's the difference, George Mueller, between the grace of faith that you say you do have, indeed he did, and the gift of faith which you say you don't have? Now, here's the quote that is the crucial answer to that question. The difference between the gift and the grace of faith seems to me this.

According to the gift of faith, I am able to do a thing or believe that a thing will come to pass, the not doing of which, or the not believing of which, would not be sin. Too many nots there to confuse you? Shall I try that again? According to the gift of faith, I am able to do a thing or believe that a thing will come to pass, the not doing of which, or the not believing of which, would not be sin. He'll give an illustration in a minute.

According to the gift of faith, I mean the grace of faith, I am able to do a thing or believe that a thing will come to pass, respecting which I have the word of God as the ground to rest upon, and therefore the not doing it, or the not believing it, would be sin. For example, this is his example. The gift of faith would be needed to believe that a sick person should be restored again, though there is no human probability.

For there is no promise to that effect. The grace of faith is needed to believe that the Lord will give me the necessities of life if I first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. For there is a promise to that effect, Matthew 6, 33.

Mueller did not think he had any biblical ground for being certain that Mary would be spared. And therefore, if he were to believe that Mary would be spared, it would have to be a special gift of faith, which he says he experienced several times in his life, two or three. I've talked to my own father about this.

And my father says exactly the same thing. He's an evangelist, has led more people to Christ than I'll ever shake a stick at, and he's 85 now, and I've asked him, did you ever pray for something and get off your knees, something that isn't promised in the Bible, get off your knees, knew you had it? He said, maybe three times. And then he gave me illustrations.

So he prayed for her healing, for his healing, Mary's healing, what he called conditionally. Namely, if it would be a good thing for them and for God's glory. But most deeply, he prayed that they would be satisfied in God, whatever he did.

And God answered that prayer. Isaiah 48, I'm sorry. Psalm 84, 11, no good thing will God withhold.

And God withheld no good thing from him when his wife died. And that's why he said, I am satisfied with God. All of this, quote, springs from taking God at his word, believing what he says.

Now my question is, how did he get to be this way? Where did this come from? Where did this life come from? What are the roots of such a utter submission and surrender to the sovereign will of God that he can say in the face of his beloved, as she goes through rheumatic fever into heaven, I am satisfied with God? Where did that come from? So I wanna go back and tell his story and show you what the biographers will not show you, to my utter dismay. You know, I've read, I've done these talks now for what? Is this 18 years or something? And I've learned a lesson about biographers. They're untrustworthy, theologically.

It's not a joke. Most people who write popular biographies, no, I think you could just generalize. With some rare exceptions.

George Marsden's biography is a magnificent exception, and Ian Murray's, and of course, there are many, I suppose, exceptions. But by and large, when you're reading the lives of popular saints, biographers don't like theology. Biographers don't like doctrine.

They wanna tell an interesting story. They don't wanna get bogged down in doctrine. They wanna sell books to Armenians and Calvinists.

To my utter dismay, I looked through, I knew exactly where I'd find it if I was gonna find it, because it happened in a certain place in his life. It's not there, it's not in this one, it's not in Delighted in God, it's not in all the ones I looked at, it's not there. The key to his life and where this comes from is not told in any of the biographies that I looked at.

But you can find it if you go there, or get the Dust and Ashes two-volume version that's so boring. Let's tell a story a little bit here. His father was an unbeliever in Germany, Prussia.

George grew up a liar, a thief. His mother died when he was 14. He doesn't record its impact, because as far as I can tell, it had none.

He was cruising about the city, he says, half intoxicated on the day she died at age 14. He went on living a bawdy life until he landed in prison at age 16 because of thievery. His father bought his way out of prison, beat him, sent him off to another town.

He began to make a living with his academic skills by tutoring in Latin, French, mathematics. Finally, he went to the University of Halle to study divinity, with 900 divinity students at the University of Halle, founded by his great hero, eventually, August Franck, who also founded orphan houses and where the roots really go back. 900, and he said later, probably nine of them feared the Lord.

In those days, divinity was a pathway to a good living, and his father wanted him, as an unbeliever, to have a good living, so go study divinity and get yourself a church. And that's what he went off to do when he was 20. And then the day came, I love these stories.

This is why I read biography. I love the grace of God breaking into people's lives. He was invited to a Bible study.

You know what they do at this Bible study? They read the Bible, they sing a song, they pray, and they read a printed sermon because it was against the law to preach, if you don't have an ordained pastor in the room. So they read a sermon. It was to me as if I had found something after which I had been seeking all my life, I immediately wished to go.

In other words, just the invitation went like a sword to his heart. Just the invitation at the appointed hour went home. To his amazement, Mueller said, the whole made a deep impression on me.

I was happy, though if I had been asked why I was happy, I could not have clearly explained. I have not the least doubt that on that evening, God began a work of grace in me. That evening was the turning point in my life.

That was 1825, he's 20 years old. Now, that was the decisive turning point. You'll read about that in all the biographies.

But there was another turning point. As decisive as far as the roots of his life go, which you never read about, except to say something happened there and not tell you what it was. So I'm gonna tell you what it was.

He came to England with the London Missionary Society and then fell out of favor eventually and left the London Missionary Society because he became disillusioned, as I said earlier, with some of their eschatology and practices. While he was studying there in London with the London Missionary Society, he got sick. This feels very much like my own story here.

I have often said, I bless you, God, for mononucleosis. And I bless you, God, for this sickness of George Mueller. And he did too.

He got sick. In fact, he almost died. As he began to get better, he was counseled, go to Teinmouth, T-E-I-G-N-M-O-U-F, Teinmouth, the mouth of the Tein River on the coast, and recover a little.

He goes there in August of 1829. So he's 24 years old, roughly. And while he's there, there's a little teeny chapel, Ebenezer Chapel, with a few dozen people.

And he attends the chapel. And the man who preached is never named in any of his writings. And I wasn't able to find it in the biographies, which is just like God, just like God, that the decisive man in his life would not be named.

Some of you are gonna be that, you know, for somebody. You're gonna be that. You need to be okay with that.

You're gonna never be named. And the man that you spent an hour with, or 100 hours with, who will go on to be the Billy Graham, or just some faithful pastor, it's written down, brothers. It is written down.

And this man, we will gather around him in heaven and say, I'm glad you were faithful that Sunday morning. In fact, it wasn't just a Sunday morning. He sat down in this man's presence and listened to him preach.

And then, by virtue of a strange providence, the house where Mueller was invited to spend the time for recuperation, that man was spending 10 days there. And that man was a very devoted lover of the doctrines of grace. Through the instrumentality of this brother, this is a quote, through the instrumentality of this brother, the Lord bestowed a great blessing upon me, for which I shall have cause to thank Him throughout eternity.

Before this period, I had been much opposed to the doctrines of election, particular redemption, final persevering grace, so much so that a few days after my arrival in Tainmouth, I called election a devilish doctrine. I knew nothing about the choice of God's people and did not believe that the child of God, when once made so, was safe forever. But now, I was brought to examine these precious truths by the word of God.

Indeed, He did. And for 10 days, they huddled together and His world was turned upside down, as many of yours has been, for great good. He embraced the doctrines of grace, robust, missions-minded, soul-winning, orphan-loving, Spurgeon-like, Livingston-like, Cary-like Calvinism.

It's a very interesting thing that William Cary died in 1834, right about the time this was happening. And Charles Spurgeon was born in 1834. And so, at this fulcrum between the missionary Calvinist and the great preacher, soul-winning Calvinist, Cary and Spurgeon, this man had his crisis experience and became the great orphan-loving Calvinist in the 19th century.

40 years later, lest you think this testimony that I just read is sort of tucked away here and he abandoned that idea later when he got really grown up in God. 40 years later, in 1870, so how old is he now, 65, Mueller spoke to some young believers, young Christians, about the importance of what had happened to him at Tammoth. He said that his preaching had been fruitless for the four years from 1825 to 1829 in Germany.

And then he came to England and was taught the doctrines of grace. And this is what he says. Now he's talking here on a New Year's Eve to a room full of young people.

In the course of time, I came to this country and it pleased God then to show to me the doctrines of grace in a way in which I had never seen them before. At first, I hated them. If this were true, I could do nothing at all in the conversion of sinners as all would depend upon God and the working of His Spirit.

But when it pleased God to reveal these truths to me, and my heart was brought to such a state that I could say, I am not only content simply to be a hammer, an ax, or a saw in God's hands, but I shall count it an honor to be taken up and used by Him in any way. And if sinners are converted through my instrumentality from my inmost soul, I will give Him all the glory. The Lord gave me to see fruit.

The Lord gave me to see fruit in abundance. Sinners were converted by scores. And ever since, God has used me in one way or the other in His service.

That's His testimony about the effect of the doctrines of grace transforming Him from a fruitless, zealous young Christian to a fruitful, zealous Christian for the next 68 years or so. This discovery of the all-encompassing sovereignty of God became the foundation of Mueller's confidence in God to answer his prayers for money. It's sad, isn't it? How many people play off prayer against belief in the sovereignty of God when in fact it's the foundation of our confidence that God can answer prayers for the impossible? But it was plain to him.

He gave up his regular salary early on in his ministry, put a box at the back, never asked people for money again. He refused to ask people directly for money. He knew this was not mandated in the Bible.

Paul clearly asked people for money. 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Don't idealize this man by saying he's trying to get you to do all the details of his life. This is a God-chosen strategy or a Mueller-chosen strategy that he believed God had called him to in order to display to the world through the orphan houses and how he was praying the money in that God is real and answered prayer.

It was all a strategic life. You gotta think what yours is. You take Matthew 6.33 and dream your dream for how to display the trustworthiness of Jesus for your city, your church.

Doesn't have to be the same as his. Certainly it doesn't have to be orphans and it doesn't have to be never asked for money. You don't have to be unbiblical to demonstrate God.

It would be unbiblical to say you cannot and dare not ask anybody for money since Paul clearly did in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. He prayed and he published his reports about the goodness of God every year and his answers to prayer. And I'll just put a parenthesis in here and I'll make anything out of it. I don't wanna make too much out of it because it would just get everything distracted.

But if I don't say it, I won't be honest to my own reactions. I get really mad at him from time to time as I read this and got angry and wondered in July of this year if I even wanted to do this lecture because he kept overstating the totality of his reliance upon prayer and faith or God rather than means. And he would get criticized for it and then he would respond to the criticisms in the book.

Namely, every year he published his reports and the reports all said this came in, this came in, this came in, this came in. Here I was praying here and this happened here. I was praying here and this happened here.

We had no money and it came. These reports went all over the world and tens of thousands of people were motivated by those reports to give money. So when you read and he says continually this money

came in simply by prayer and faith.

I just got so mad, in the margin, I go simply, that's not the right word. Simply, it's not simple. But this man really was simple minded in a positive biblical way.

God gave him a grace not to be paralyzed by problems that I see everywhere. Like, if you really wanted to show God's faithfulness, stop publishing those reports. The day after he decided with his life to found the orphan houses on the basis of prayer and faith alone, he put a news release in the Bristol paper that he was gonna do it.

Okay, that's the parenthesis I said I wasn't gonna get too worked up about. He ticked me off and I came away at the end loving him enough to just cry over his life. I don't think I would have liked him very much, frankly.

I really don't. But I don't think I would have liked the apostle Paul. Either he believed in memes, let's rescue him now from this.

He really believed in memes. He admitted that the reports were motivating people, but he stressed, I don't trust the reports. Now, we've got to be able to do this, brothers, because you can't avoid memes.

You may try your best to avoid memes. You can't avoid memes. While you live in the body, you cannot avoid memes of getting things done.

You must be a human being. Your hands, your feet are on your body in order to be memes of getting things done. And they are not meant to become idols or the way you trust.

So he says, and you've heard these quotes, work with all your might, but trust not the least in your work. That's the kind of thing that we listen, we got to live with that. Work with all your might, but trust not the least in your work.

And I'm sure one of the things we'll talk about on this panel tomorrow is how in the world, in the church and in the family, do you decide what are proper means for raising money and what are not? And we'll see where we go with that. But he clearly had his means and one of them was not ever asking anybody for money, just publishing the reports of how destitute he was when they didn't give. Well, that was his strategy.

When faced with a crisis in having no means, as far as he could tell, to pay the bill, he would say, how the means are to come, I know not, but I know that God is almighty and that he hears that the hearts of all are in his hands and that if he pleases to influence persons, they will help. Now, that's where I get the idea that the sovereignty of God over the human heart became the foundation of his confidence that God would answer his prayers and cause money to come in. He said, the hearts of all men in Australia, China, America, England, the hearts of all men are in the hands of God.

If I send a message to my father that these orphans and I have needs and he promises I will meet all your needs according to my riches in glory in Christ Jesus, you walk uprightly, you seek the kingdom first, I will keep my promise. The only way, when he saw 2,000 kids hanging month to month on God, the only way he could be peaceful is to know God is sovereign over the hearts of people who I've never spoken a word to. I do not wanna minimize what he accomplished.

All those negative things I said and wish he had said it more carefully does not nullify the fact you cannot explain this man's life without God. You cannot. It is a most remarkable thing.

So the sovereignty of God over the human heart became the ground of his evangelism, and he was a remarkable evangelist, and the ground of his prayers, and it was the means by which he handled his occasional tragedies. He said, the Lord never lays on us in the way of chastisement more than our state of heart makes needful, so that whilst he smites with the one hand, he supports with the other. I wish so many of my sovereignty-fearing friends could understand that, because they just feel that if we say God causes something, this is unintelligible.

He can't be bearing up Mary. He can't be bearing up George if he's actually in charge of the rheumatic fever. That's the way he lived.

I mean, you may not be able to live that way. You may not be able to embrace that biblical truth. He smites and he sustains.

He has his reasons for why we need to experience trials, and he has his graces to hold us up in the trials, but I just want you to know, George Mueller, everybody's hero, believed in the sovereignty of God like you wouldn't believe. I bow, he said as she died. I bow.

I am satisfied with the will of my heavenly Father. I seek by perfect submission to his holy will to glorify him. I kiss continually the hand that has afflicted me.

He was about to lose a piece of property that he really thought he needed for the next orphan house, and he said, if the Lord were to take this piece of land, now let me, before I finish this, just picture a situation in your church right now, okay? Piece of land you'd like to have, building program, a cranky deacon, a marital conflict, just something that's about to, it could go either way, and you'd be real disappointed if it went one way and real happy if it went the other way, and see if you live your life like this. If the Lord were to take this piece of land from me, it would be only for the purpose of giving me a still better one, for our heavenly Father never takes any earthly thing from his children except he means to give them something better instead. That's not the gift of faith, that's believing what the Bible says.

No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. This is the root of George Mueller's faith in ministry. These are the doctrines of grace fleshing themselves out for orphans and for missions and for Bible distribution and for missionary support and for the display of the faithfulness of God.

But there was an aroma about this Calvinism that was different from the stereotypes. It was an aroma about this Calvinism. And here's another thing I've learned about doing biographies over the years.

I read them through Christian hedonist glasses, and I find it everywhere. And so you just need to know, I'm as biased as the day is long. If I can sniff out Christian hedonism somewhere, I am gonna sniff it out like a hound and get it on the table for you guys to see.

Because what I have found is that it is everywhere. And when Randy Alcorn walks over here and says, sort of sounds like hedonism, I say, sort of, there's no other word for it. Where do you think I learned it? It's all over the pages of the Gospels.

If you lose your life, you save it. No, that's another sermon. Let's let Mueller, let's let Mueller do it now because brothers, this is a reformed conference.

I wave the flag of the sovereignty of God. The doctrines of grace are what makes this conference tick. But there's a flavor I want to communicate.

There's a Spurgeon-like, Carey-like, Livingston-like, and I can name a few others, flavor to Calvinism when it's biblically saturated and biblically balanced that is not in anybody's stereotypes out there throwing stones. And Mueller's another one of the guys who gets it. So let me try to show you what I mean by this flavor or this aroma.

The aroma is that for him, the sovereign goodness of God was experienced first and foremost in the satisfaction of his own soul. He didn't just talk about the sovereignty of God. He talked about the sovereign goodness of God.

And the whole God that he knew and saw in the Bible satisfied his soul. What he saw in what God was able to do in answer to prayer for orphans made him the happiest man in Bristol. 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 happy in God himself.

Day by day, seek to make this the most important business of your life. This has been my firm, settled conviction for the last five and 30 years. For the first four years after, mark that.

You know what those, that's prior to the doctrines of grace. Got it? For the first four years after my conversion, I knew not its vast importance. What its? Pursuing happiness in God.

I knew not its importance. But now, after much experience, I specially commend this point of notice to my younger brethren and sisters in Christ. The secret of all true, effectual service is joy in God.

Having experimental acquaintance and fellowship with God himself. Now my question is, Mueller, why is, quote, the most important thing, joy in God and the pursuit of it? Why is daily happiness in God, quote, of supreme and paramount importance, unquote? And one answer that he gives is, it glorifies God. Because after telling about his wife's illness earlier, one from which he did recover, he says, I have stated the case so fully to show the deep importance to be satisfied with the will of God.

Not only for the sake of glorifying him, I'm gonna pause there and say that very slowly so that you can see what he's saying. I have dwelt long on this. To show the deep importance to be satisfied with the will of God for the sake of glorifying him.

In other words, to be satisfied with the will of God glorifies God. It shows that his will and his character are supremely satisfying. And that makes him look good to those who are watching.

But also, it is the best way of having us receive the desire of our hearts. Being satisfied in God is, quote, of supreme and paramount importance because it glorifies God. It shows that he's gloriously satisfying.

But there's another reason, there's another answer to the question, why? Why do you stress this? Why do you seem to overstate the case by saying, this is of paramount importance every day to get your heart happy in the Lord alone and not in ministry and not in books, not in money, but in the Lord? Why is that of so supreme importance? And here is his second answer. Namely, it is the only source of durable and

God-honoring self-denial and sacrifice and love. Joy in God is the only durable and God-honoring source of self-denial, sacrifice, and love to people.

Quote, we should begin the thing in the right way. Now, he's challenging his listeners here to a radical, wartime, simpler lifestyle. He literally owned nothing.

The Institute for Scripture Knowledge at home and abroad owned everything, and he owned nothing and got no salary. We should begin the way, the thing in a right way. That is, aim after the right state of heart.

Begin inwardly instead of outwardly. If otherwise, it will not last. We shall look back and even get into a worse state than we were in before, but oh, how different if the joy in God leads us to any little act of self-denial.

How gladly do we do it then, from which I draw the phrase glad self-denial. How different if joy in God leads to any little act of self-denial. How gladly do we do it then.

I would say the aroma over his Calvinism is the smell of glad self-denial, not begrudging self-denial. That smells bad. People who deny themselves for you begrudgingly stink, but people who deny themselves for you gladly smell good.

You're drawn to them. You don't want to get away from them. You're drawn to them, because that looks like love.

Glad self-denial looks like love. How can there be such a thing as glad self-denial? I mean, that's an oxymoron. That's a self-contradiction.

His answer, quote, self-denial is not so much an impoverishment as a postponement. We make a sacrifice of a present good for the sake of a future and greater good. Therefore, happiness in God is of supreme importance because it's the key to a life of love, a life of sacrifice, a life of risk.

Quote, whatever be done in the way of giving up or self-denial or deadness to the world should result from the joy we have in God. Close example. A well-to-do woman came to him.

This happened often. She has money she wants to give to some appropriate cause, and he talks with her for a half an hour or so. Finds out that she's got 500 pounds.

That was a lot of money in those days in Bristol, England, and he never asks her for the money. But when she leaves, he asks God for her money, and the way he says it to God shows you the very key to his understanding of the human heart and God. This is what he prayed.

After she was gone, I asked the Lord that he would be pleased to make this dear sister so happy in himself and enable her so to realize her true riches and inheritance in the Lord Jesus and the reality of her heavenly calling that she might be constrained by the love of Christ cheerfully to lay down this 500 pounds at his feet. Brothers, if you want your church ever to embrace the sovereignty of God, or to be specific in regard to this conference, if you want your church ever to be willing to hear you preach some hard sermons on giving, it's got to have the flavor of Christian hedonism. You don't have to use that phrase.

That's my phrase. It's got to have the flavor of make her so happy. Make this congregation so happy.

Help this congregation to realize its true riches. Help them to realize their heavenly calling that they will be constrained from the inside out to lay down their 500 pounds, their \$10,000 for the cause of the kingdom. It's got to have a flavor about it that all of your tough, in-their-face preaching will make them as happy as can be.

They got to feel that. I say a lot of hard things to my people. I shout at them.

I tell them they're gonna go to hell if they keep doing this or that. And you know what? They don't fire me. I think it's because I've cultivated, at least I try to cultivate, this will really make us happy.

If we live this way, if we strip down to a wartime lifestyle, if we give our goods away, if we take risks with our lives, if we move to this place or that place, it'll be good for us. You will fly. And I think they can taste it.

It's another kind of Calvinism than they have known in so many places. In what, he asks now, and this is the practical question as we move towards the close, in what way, these are his words, in what way shall we attain to this settled happiness of soul? How shall we learn to enjoy God? How obtain such an all-sufficient, soul-satisfying, can you believe it? He said that? That's my word. That's my word.

I create hyphenated words. No, you don't. There's nothing new under the sun, Piper.

Get off. How obtain such an all-sufficient, soul-satisfying portion in himself as shall enable us to let go the things of this world as vain and worthless in comparison? I answer, now that was a question. How shall we have such happiness that enables us to let go? What's the key underneath Alcorn? Perry, Verwer, Piper, you, what's the key that'll enable us to walk out of here and not think we need a new cup, but fund a second pastorate in the city where they can't afford it? What's the key? His answer, 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. Happiness in God comes from seeing God in the face of Jesus Christ through the Scriptures. Quote, in them we become acquainted with the character of God.

Our eyes are divinely opened to see what a lovely being God is. And this good, gracious, loving, heavenly Father is ours, our portion for time and eternity. Knowing God through the Bible, experientially by the Spirit, is the key to being happy in God, which releases risk and sacrifice for the world.

Quote, the more we know of God, the happier we are. When we became a little acquainted with God, our true happiness commenced. And the more we become acquainted with him, the more truly happy we become.

What will make us so exceedingly happy in heaven? It will be the fuller knowledge of God. Therefore, the most crucial question is the means of fighting for joy. How shall we fight for this joy? How shall we see God in the Bible? He was 71 years old now when he spoke to these younger believers.

This is that same message I referred to earlier. Now, in brotherly love and affection, I would give a few hints to my younger fellow believers. And I feel like saying, since I'm probably older than most, though not all of you, I feel like just saying this is a word now from Mueller to the younger of his day and Piper to the younger of his day.

Now, in brotherly love and affection, I would give a few hints to my younger fellow believers slash pastors as to the way in which to keep up spiritual enjoyment. It is absolutely needful, in order that happiness in the Lord may continue, that Scriptures be regularly read. These are God's appointed means for the nourishment of the inner man.

Consider it, ponder over it, especially we should read regularly through the Scriptures consecutively from the front to the back and not pick out here and there a chapter. If we do, we remain spiritual dwarfs. I tell you so affectionately.

He was a little bit embarrassed that he called them dwarfs. I tell you so affectionately, for the first four years, there it is again, he knew what had happened to him when he met that unnamed man for 10 days in Tameth. For the first four years after my conversion, I made no progress because I neglected the Bible.

But then I regularly read on through the whole with reference to my own heart and soul. I directly made progress. And then my peace and joy continued more and more.

Now I have been doing this for 47 years. I have read through the whole Bible about 100 times. He's 71, he's got 21 years yet to go.

So when Pearson said he read through the Bible almost 200 times, he picked up the pace. Now, I have been doing this for 47 years. He's telling his young people, I've read through the Bible front to back 100 times, and I always find it fresh when I begin again.

Thus my peace and my joy have increased more and more. 71 years old, and he goes on and on, 21 more years. But he never changed his strategy for how to fight for joy.

I saw more clearly than ever, he writes, I saw more clearly than ever that the first and great and primary business I ought to attend to every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord. The means, says it again. I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the word of God, to meditation on it.

What is the food of the inner man? Not prayer, amazing. Here's the man that's known all over the world for prayer, and he says it's second to the reading of the Bible. If you wanna be successful or fruitful in ministry, this is where you must feed every day.

Not prayer, but the word of God, and not simple reading of the word of God so that it only passes through our minds as water through a pipe. But considering what we read, pondering over it, applying it to our lives, which brings us back now to his wife's death, Mary. Remember what he said.

My heart was at rest. I was satisfied with God. And all this springs, as I have said often before, from taking God at his word, believing what he says.

The aim of his life was that God be glorified as people saw God appear trustworthy and satisfying in the life of George Mueller. To keep his heart satisfied in God, he read the Bible 200 times, reading it slowly. Read that to find a lot of practical things that he says about that.

I was talking with Andy here from Durham just a few minutes ago, stressing Bible memory. And I said, you know, the main reason for memorizing extended passages of scripture is not that you'll remember them forever, though they do come back more easily, but that in America, where nobody knows how to

meditate, if you tell them to memorize six or eight or 10 verses, they have to spend so much time repeating it to themselves, they learn, my goodness, I'm meditating. So get your people to memorize the Bible.

Memorize scripture. The aim of Mueller's life was that people would see God to be gloriously trustworthy and satisfying, as he cared for orphans and was able to roll all of his burdens on to the Lord. So it goes like this.

I put it in S's in case it'll help you remember it. See God, gotta see him, that's the source of our joy. S, second S, be satisfied in him when you see him.

Third S, be set free by this satisfaction from greed and fear and become risk-taking, sacrificial, self-denying, loving people. Find your own strategy in your own church of what that looks like. And I already said the fourth S, strategy.

Find a strategy. See God, satisfaction in God. Set free for love, a strategy of risk.

So he was sustained this way all his life since that crucial time in Timoth on the coast of England. While his wife was dying, and I close with this now, he had a hymn that he kept repeating to himself over and over again. Here's the key verse.

Best of blessings he'll provide us, naught but good shall e'er be tied us. Safe to glory he will guide us, oh how he loves. I'll say it again.

Best of blessings he'll provide us, naught but good shall e'er be tied us. Safe to glory he will guide us, oh how he loves. So I'm gonna close by letting George Mueller plead with you.

These are his words. He wants you to share his experience. He doesn't expect you to found an orphanage, though some of you might found something for AIDS orphans, perhaps, or street children, or what burdens your heart.

Take a risk, get some crazy people involved. Sell their houses, go a new place, do a new thing, dream a dream. He wants you to share the joy that he had, and so I close by letting him plead with you.

My dear Christian reader, will you not try this way? Will you not know for yourself the preciousness and the happiness of this way of casting all your cares and burdens and necessities upon God? This way is open to you as to me. Everyone is invited and commanded to trust in the Lord, to trust in Him with all his heart, and to cast his burden upon Him, and to call upon Him in the day of trouble. Will you not do this, my dear Christian friend in Christ? I long that you may do so.

I desire that you may taste the sweetness of that state of heart in which, while surrounded by difficulties and necessities, you can yet be at peace, because you know that the living God, your Father in heaven, cares for you. Father in heaven, I praise you for your grace in the life of George Mueller. What a life he lived.

He may have had aggravating aspects to his personality, as we all do, but oh, what a grace of faith. And we want it. We've been hearing challenges to it so far from Dwight and Randy, and we want to get inside Jesus' promises.

I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you. Therefore, we can confidently say, the Lord is my helper.

What can man do to me? Seek the kingdom first. All these things will be added to you. No good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

My God will supply all your needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus. Be satisfied with me. Go for it.

Oh, God, release 900 or so pastors into a fresh, risk-taking ministry that displays to their church and to the world that they have a prayer here in God and that he is faithful, still, and all-satisfying come what? And I ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/-zYDTc2ZDMQ.mp4>

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