

Use Means, but Trust in God

by John Piper

This sermon focuses on the life of George Muller, highlighting his incredible faith and reliance on God as he cared for thousands of orphans and undertook missionary work. The key lesson emphasized is to work diligently but ultimately trust in God for the success and outcome of our efforts, acknowledging that true glory belongs to God. The message encourages listeners to serve in God's strength, ensuring that He receives all the glory for both the origin and results of their work.

Duration: 17:32

Scripture: Proverbs 21:31, Psalms 20:7, 1 Corinthians 15:10, 1 Peter 4:11, Romans 11:36, Matthew 11:30

Topics: "Faith in Action", "Trusting God's Provision"

Description

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Transcript

Would you pray with me? Father, it would be my heart's desire, and I know I speak for everyone, if on the day when we are 59, backwards, we could say from the bottom of our heart, I'd rather have Jesus than anything. And so I pray that the effect of that testimony and song in these remaining minutes tonight would be that we cherish Christ more and that we rely more fully upon him. In his name I pray, amen.

George Muller was born in Germany in 1805, and he died in 1898 in Germany. He was a follow-up specialist for D.L. Moody, and he preached in Spurgeon's Tabernacle, and he inspired Hudson Taylor in his missionary dreams, and he preached in the same church for 66 years and lived out his life mainly in Bristol, England when he was 28, he founded what he called the Scripture Knowledge Institute. It had five, what he called, objects.

One was to found schools abroad, two, Bible distribution, three, missionary support, four, tract distribution, and five, the one we know him for best, to use his own words, to board and clothe and scripturally educate destitute children who have lost both parents by death. And so he built five orphanages, and by the time he had died, he had cared for 10,024 orphans. And he did all of this while preaching three times a week, and when he turned 70, he fulfilled a dream and became a missionary, and for the next 17 years, traveled

to 42 countries, preaching on an average of once a day to about three million people total.

And when he was 92, he led a prayer meeting on a Wednesday evening at his church and went home, and when they brought him his tea at seven o'clock in the morning, they found him dead on the floor beside his bed. He had read his Bible 200 times from beginning to end. He had prayed in millions of dollars.

I had somebody do the calculation for me in today's dollars, and they estimated 150 million. Prayed it in without asking anybody for money. He never took a salary for the last 68 years of his ministry.

He trusted God to put it in people's heart to give him what he needed. He never took out a loan and the orphans, and he were never hungry. Now what makes him so relevant for tonight, I think for us here in this room, is that his biographer, A.T. Pearson, said, I love this phrase, and I hope it lands on you with something you want to be and do.

He devised large and liberal things for the cause of Christ. And I think in a room like this, there are probably many people who have or who dream of devising large and liberal things for the cause of Christ. And I want to encourage you in that tonight.

I want to strengthen your hand to devise large and liberal things and to keep on going for 95 or 92 years to see them through, in spite of the fact that you are keenly aware and I am keenly aware of the perils of power and pretension and pride in this industry, and I don't need to belabor it for you. Large, liberal, Christ-exalting, God-centered, truth-driven vision is what I pray I will strengthen your hand in in these next few minutes. So I want to give you one of the keys to Muller's life.

The reason I told you a little bit about Muller is because I want to draw out of Muller a key that most recently has so deeply become a cutting edge in my spiritual quest. It's this, work really hard, morning till night, be a worker, and do not trust in your work, trust in God. Work really hard and don't trust in the work, trust in God.

Now let me give you his own words. Quote, this is one of the great secrets in connection with successful service of the Lord, to work as if everything depended upon our diligence, and yet not to rest in the least upon our exertions, but upon the blessing of the Lord who alone can cause your efforts to be made effectual to the benefit of your fellow men or fellow believers. In other words, labor with all your might and do not trust in your labor, trust in God.

Plan hard, but don't trust in your plans, trust in God. Speak clearly and creatively, but don't trust in your speaking, trust in God. Sing and don't trust in your singing, trust in God.

Create and produce and lead and manage, but don't trust in your creativity and leadership and management and productivity, trust in God. That's the message of George Mueller I want you to feel the force of tonight. It is one of the simplest lessons you will ever learn and one of the hardest you will ever perform, because we are wired, we sinners, we fallen, self-exalting, self-serving sinners are wired for our emotions to go up when our plans have savvy and our emotions to go down when our plans look less than they have savvy.

At least mine do, and I don't like it about myself that my anxiety quotient rises and falls with my insight into how to solve a problem instead of giving it my best shot and trusting. So, Proverbs 21.33, the horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory belongs to the Lord. So get the horse ready for the day of

battle by all means, but don't trust in the horse, trust in God.

Or Psalm 20, verse seven. Let me give you this one in a four-year-old form. I've got four sons and a daughter, and Abraham was four once upon a time, and he looked like he was gonna be my preacher, and he would stand on a platform not quite this high when he was four, and he would take Psalm 20, verse seven, and he would say, hey, some trust in horses, some trust in chariots, but we trust in the name of our Lord, our God, and he would leap off the platform.

So Abraham, get your horses ready, and get your chariots ready, but son, don't trust in the horses, and don't trust in the chariots, trust in God. Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. So build your house, but don't trust in your house, trust in God.

Unless the watchman watches over the city, we stay awake in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. So put out your watchman, be a watchman, but don't trust in the watchman, trust in God.

Mueller really worked hard, morning till night at the orphanage with his wife, Mary, for 39 years at his side, and then with his wife, Susanna, after Mary died for 23 years at his side. They really worked. He said that in the morning they would pray together before they went off to the orphanages, and then as the day was drawing to a close just before supper in the evening, I'll read you what happened.

This is his own words. In the evening, during the last hour of the stay at the orphan houses, though her or my work was never so much, it was an habitually understood thing that this hour was for prayer. My beloved wife came to my room, and now our prayer and supplication and intercession, mingled with thanksgiving, lasted generally 40 or 50 minutes, and sometimes the whole hour, and these seasons we brought perhaps 50 or more different points or persons or circumstances before God.

Mueller and his wife did not pray instead of work. They prayed because they didn't trust their work. They trusted God.

Prayer isn't something that signifies laziness. It simply signifies what you trust, and I encourage you, trust God, but I wanna go farther than Mueller. I want to go farther than Mueller tonight for you because I would like to lift off of you tonight.

That is, I would like God to lift off of you tonight, not only the burden of the outcome of your work, but the burden of the origin of your work as well. I wanna go beyond Mueller's saying to the biblical saying. I wanna go beyond Mueller to Philippians 2.12. Work out your own salvation for it is God who is at work in you to will and to do His good pleasure.

We work outwardly because God is at work inwardly. We trust Him not just for the outcome of our labors, but for the labors themselves. I wanna go beyond Mueller to lift off of you the burden of your own labor.

I love 1 Corinthians 15.10. By the grace of God, I am what I am, and His grace towards me was not in vain, but I labored harder than any of them. Nevertheless, it was not I, but the grace of God which was with me. It isn't simply true that you should work hard and then not trust your work, but trust God for the outcome.

It's also true that you should work hard and then trust God that He gave you the strength to work hard. And once you learn that, it is a glorious and freeing thing on the front end of your work to obey 1 Peter

4.11. Let him who serves serve in the strength that God supplies. I'm gonna start over now so that you hear it.

This applies to every branch of broadcasting. This applies to every sermon I ever preach, every counseling session I ever have, any conversation. Let him who serves serve in the strength that God supplies so that in everything, God will get the glory through Jesus Christ to whom belongs the dominion and the glory forever.

Now did you hear the logic of that verse? Surely, I heard it in the oath that was taken just a moment ago. Surely, what unites us in this room is a passion to so labor that not we, but Christ gets the glory. That verse is the key.

Serve in the strength that God supplies so that in everything, God gets the glory, meaning the giver gets the glory. Therefore, we must go beyond Mueller. Now I know Mueller loved this point.

I'll read you the sentence that proves it. Though I am weak and erring on many points, God will bless me as long as he shall enable me to act according to his will in this matter. Is not that an amazing way to talk? God will bless me as long as he will enable me to do his will and thus qualify for the blessing.

For from him and through him and therefore back to him be the glory are all things. To him be glory forever and ever. So I conclude, by all means, let us follow George Mueller.

Oh, may the members, the attenders at the National Religious Broadcasters work with all your might and then not trust in your work, trust in God. And may you go beyond that Mueller-esque saying and trust God not only for the outcome of your work, but for the origin of your work because God means to get the glory for both its origin and its outcome. And when you do, you know what will happen? He will get the glory and you will discover with Mueller that his yoke is easy and his burden is light.

And when you become old, maybe 92 or 95, you will say with Mueller, quote, I am bound to state this and I do it with pleasure. My master has been a kind master to me. I have not served a hard master and that is what I delight to show.

Father, I pray that you would prove yourself to be a kind master for us and that you would become for us the enabler of the work you call us to do so that both the origin of our labors and the outcome of our labors are found to be a gift and you get all the glory. In Jesus' name, I pray.

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