**George Muller - A Man Who Dared to Act on God's Word**

George Muller loved the Bible. It was here, in the Word of God, that he met his Master every morning, and here he fed on the promises of God all day long. Although he was known for his life of faith and answered prayer, Muller testified that his faith was not a special gift over and above what every Christian has. His faith was the common faith. If he were in any way special, it was in the way he applied his faith to the Word of God. He read the Bible, believed what he read, and then applied the promises of God that he found there to his daily life and work.

Muller writes concerning the truths in the Bible, "These are precious truths, not man's inventions. The Book of God speaks of them again and again. The Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, and others, are full of these glorious truths. But what we need is, that they become increasingly realities to us. Not so much that we are able to speak with clearness about them, but that more and more we know their power in our hearts" (Narratives, vol. 2, p. 717).

***Early Years***

Born in 1805, Muller grew up a chief sinner in Prussia (part of today's Germany), a land where the gospel was not preached and where few genuine Christians could be found. At an early age he began to drink, gamble, and travel. To support these expensive habits, he learned to lie, cheat, and steal. He stole from his father, his friends, and even the clergy. By the time he was sixteen, he had already spent time in jail. Muller describes his condition:

*I had no Bible, and had not read in it for years. I went to church but seldom; but, from custom, I took the Lord's Supper twice a year. I had never heard the gospel preached. I had never met with a person who told me that he meant, by the help of God, to live according to the Holy Scriptures. In short, I had not the least idea that there were any persons really different from myself, except in degree (Autobiography, p. 38).*

Muller's father wanted George to support him in his retirement, so he sent George to the city of Halle to study for the ministry. The elder Muller had dreams of his son becoming a Lutheran minister. He hoped George would invite him to live his retirement years in a comfortable parsonage. But the young Muller, though in divinity school, was far from God.

At times, Muller attempted to reform, but his efforts were in vain. He found himself sinking even deeper into sin, all the while studying theology. Then an invitation changed everything.

***Saved!***

One Saturday afternoon in November 1825, he and Beta, a close friend, talked as they walked home. Beta told him that he had begun meeting with some Christians in a home where they "read the Bible, sang, prayed, and read a printed sermon." (At this time in Prussia it was illegal to preach a sermon without an ordained member of the clergy present.) As Beta described the gathering, Muller felt this might be the thing for which he had been seeking all his life (Autobiography, p. 38). That very evening they attended the home gathering together. Muller later wrote,

*After singing an opening hymn, an older Christian brother fell on his knees and asked for God's blessing on the meeting. This kneeling down made a deep impression upon me, for I had never either seen anyone on his knees, nor had I ever myself prayed on my knees!.At the close [of our gathering] we sang another hymn, and then the master of the house prayed. Whilst he prayed, my feeling was something like this: "I could not pray as well, though I am much more learned than this illiterate man." The whole [time] made a deep impression on me (Autobiography, p. 40).*

He left happier than he had been for a long time, though he could not have told anyone why he was so happy.

That evening was the beginning of God's work of grace in Muller's heart. He looked back at it later as the turning point in his life. He went home and lay in his bed, peaceful and happy. On the following Monday he returned to the house where they had gathered, because it seemed too long to wait until the next Saturday. Muller and his host read the Bible together, and grace continued to work. Muller wrote,

*Now my life became very different, though not so that all sins were given up at once. My wicked companions were given up; the going to taverns was entirely discontinued; the habitual practice of telling falsehoods was no longer indulged in; but still a few times after this I spoke an untruth. I read the Scriptures, prayed often, loved the brethren, went to church from right motives, and stood on the side of Christ, though laughed at by my fellow-students (Ibid.).*

Muller had become a genuine Christian. He was born again, and the grace active in his heart enabled him to live the life that he had been powerless to live before. His old manner of life was being removed so that a new life could begin. His appreciation for the Bible began to grow.

***Need For The Word***

Although he was a theology student, he had never had an opportunity to preach. Then the day came, and he prepared the only way he knew. He spent most of the week memorizing a printed sermon. After delivering it, he was asked to speak to the same group later that day. What was he to say? He couldn't deliver the same memorized sermon.

*It came to my mind to read the fifth chapter of Matthew, and to make such remarks as I was able. I did so. Immediately upon beginning to expound "Blessed are the poor in spirit," etc., I felt myself greatly assisted; and whereas in the morning my sermon had not been simple enough for the people to understand, it was listened to with the greatest attention, and I think it was also understood. My own peace and joy were great. I felt this a blessed work (Ibid., p. 59).*

Muller considered his experience. He felt that whenever he had an opportunity to preach, he wanted to do so as he had that afternoon. Years later he became known for expounding the Scriptures clearly in the power of the Holy Spirit. He, like the Apostle Paul, could say, "And my speech and my proclamation were not in persuasive words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, in order that your faith would not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:4-5).

Muller began to fall into a common snare of many young believers. He read religious books, tracts, missionary papers, sermons, and biographies of godly men, but neglected the Bible. "The consequence," he says, "was that I remained a babe, both in knowledge and grace." In hindsight, he realized his attitude should have been

*to read again and again this most precious book of books, most earnestly, most prayerfully, and with much meditation; and in this practice I ought to continue all the days of my life. But instead of acting thus, my difficulty in understanding it, and the little enjoyment I had in it, made me careless of reading it; and thus, like many believers, I practically preferred, for the first four years of my divine life, the works of uninspired men to the oracles of the living God (Ibid., p. 61).*

***The Influence Of Craik***

Muller had a desire to become a missionary to the Jews, so after his graduation he moved to London, England, to prepare for this work under the auspices of The London Missionary Society. Once there, he became impressed by the account of Anthony Norris Groves, one of the "so-called Brethren," who gave up his lucrative dentistry practice to become a missionary to Baghdad, financed entirely by faith.

Hard study caused Muller's health to fail, and he was advised to travel to the small country town of Teignmouth to recover. Here he met Henry Craik, another of the Brethren. (Craik had tutored Groves's children and had been strongly influenced by him.) Immediately a bond was formed. Craik loved the Bible and spent hours in it every day. He opened the Word to Muller as it had never been opened before. Muller lists some matters that he began to see:

*That the Word of God alone is our standard of judgment in spiritual things; that it can be explained only by the Holy Spirit; and that in our day, as well as in former times, He [the Holy Spirit] is the teacher of His people. The office of the Holy Spirit I had not experimentally understood before that time. Indeed, of the office of each of the blessed persons, in what is commonly called the Trinity, I had no experimental apprehension. I had not before seen from the Scriptures that the Father chose us before the foundation of the world; that in Him the wonderful plan of our redemption originated, and that He also appointed all the means by which it was to be brought about. Further, that the Son, to save us, had fulfilled the law to satisfy its demands, and with it also the holiness of God; that He had borne the punishment due to our sins, and had thus satisfied the justice of God. And further, that the Holy Spirit alone can teach us about our state by nature, show us the need of a Savior, enable us to believe in Christ, explain to us the Scriptures, help us in preaching, &c. It was my beginning to understand this latter point in particular, which had a great effect on me; for the Lord enabled me to put it to the test of experience, by laying aside commentaries, and almost every other book, and simply read the word of God and study it. The result of this was, that the first evening that I shut myself into my room, to give myself to prayer and meditation over the Scriptures, I learned more in a few hours than I had done during a period of several months previously. But the particular difference was that I received real strength for my soul in doing so. I now began to try by the test of the Scriptures the things which I had learned and seen, and found that only those principles, which stood the test, were really of value (Narratives, vol. 1, pp. 39-40).*

Muller said that this time with Craik felt like a second conversion. His study of the Scriptures led him to feel that he should serve God directly, not under the control of a mission board. Accordingly, he dropped his missionary dreams and joined Craik in his labor in Teignmouth. He later wrote of this time,

*We were now drawn more fully together, for between July, 1829, and January, 1830, I had seen the leading truths connected with the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; I had apprehended the all-sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures as our rule and the Holy Spirit as our teacher; I had seen clearly the precious doctrines of the grace of God, about which I had been uninstructed for nearly four years after my conversion; and I had learned the heavenly calling of the Church of Christ, and the consequent position of the believer in this world (Harding, pp. 44-45).*

***The Bible As The Standard***

Muller wanted the Bible to be the measure of everything. He gives this account:

*About the beginning of April I went to preach at Sidmouth [a small town near Teignmouth]. While I was staying there, three sisters in the Lord had, in my presence, a conversation about baptism, one of whom had been baptized after she had believed. When they had conversed a little on the subject, I was asked to give my opinion concerning it. My reply was, "I do not think that I need to be baptized again." I was then asked by the sister who had been baptized, "But have you been baptized?" I answered, "Yes, when I was a child." She then replied, "Have you ever read the Scriptures, and prayed with reference to this subject?" I answered, "No." "Then," she said, "I entreat you, never to speak any more about it till you have done so." It pleased the Lord to show me the importance of this remark; for whilst at that very time I was exhorting every one to receive nothing which could not be proved by the Word of God, I had repeatedly spoken against believers' baptism, without having ever earnestly examined the Scriptures, or prayed concerning it; and now I determined, if God would help me, to examine that subject also, and if infant baptism were found to be scriptural, I would earnestly defend it; and if believers' baptism were right, I would as strenuously defend that, and be baptized.*

After such an examination, Muller said,

*I saw from the Scriptures that believers ONLY are the proper subjects for baptism, and that immersion is the only true Scriptural mode, in which it ought to be attended to. The passage which particularly convinced me of the former, is Acts 8:36-38, and of the latter, Rom. 6:3-5. Sometime after, I was baptized (Narratives, vol. 1, pp. 51-53).*

On another point he wrote,

*During this summer also it appeared to me Scriptural, according to the example of the Apostles, Acts 20:7, to break bread every Lord's day, though there is no commandment given to do so, either by the Lord, or by the Holy Ghost through the Apostles. And at the same time it appeared to me Scriptural, according to Eph. 4, Rom. 12, &c., that there should be given room for the Holy Ghost to work through any of the brethren whom He pleased to use; that thus one member might benefit the other with the gift which the Lord has bestowed upon him. Accordingly at certain meetings any of the brethren had an opportunity to exhort or teach the rest, if they considered that they had any thing to say which might be beneficial to the hearers (Ibid., p. 54).*

Muller learned to mix the Word with prayer in total dependence on God in order to have the Lord's mind and blessing. Even though he describes himself as "a foreigner...with great natural obstacles in the way,...not able to speak English with fluency" (Life of Trust, p. 74), he was pure in his desire to serve God and give Him all the glory. What God gave him, he faithfully spoke. This resonated in the spirits of those who also sought God. Muller had begun to find his ministry.

***Living By Faith***

On October 7, 1830, Muller married Mary Groves, sister of Anthony Norris Groves, a respected Brethren missionary to Baghdad. Her love for the Lord and her desire to serve at any cost matched his. She was indeed God's provision for what lay ahead, because together they were about to make a stand that would have proven impossible were they not so equally consecrated. Their motivation was the Word of God. Following are some of the principles they followed.

***1. No Salary***

As he wrote later,

*About this time I began to have conscientious objections against any longer receiving a stated salary. My reasons against it were these:*

***a****. The salary was made up of pew-rents; but pew-rents are, according to James 2:1-6 against the mind of the Lord, as in general, the poor brother cannot have so good a seat as the rich....*

***b****. ...I do not know whether he pays the money grudgingly, and of necessity, or cheerfully; but God loveth a cheerful giver....*

***c****. ...I felt that pew-rents were a snare to the servant of Christ (Life of Trust, pp. 81-82).*

A box was therefore placed in the chapel into which free-will offerings could be anonymously placed for his support.

Mary also supported George's decision to give up his salary. Muller said,

*About the same time also my wife and I had grace given to us to take the Lord's commandment, "Sell that ye have, and give alms," Luke 12:33, literally, and to carry it out. Our staff and support in this matter were Matthew 6:19-34; John 14:13, 14. We leaned on the arm of the Lord Jesus. It is now fifty-one years, since we set out in this way, and we do not in the least regret the step we then took (Narratives, vol. 1, p. 55).*

***2. No Mention Of Need To Man***

*At the same time it appeared to me right, that henceforth I should ask no man, not even my beloved brethren and sisters, to help me, as I had done a few times according to their own request, as my expenses, on account of traveling much in the Lord's service, were too great to be met by my usual income. For unconsciously I had thus again been led, in some measure, to trust in an arm of flesh; going to man, instead of going to the Lord at once. To come to this conclusion before God, required more grace than to give up my salary (Narratives, vol. 1, p. 55).*

***3. No Savings***

*Let no one profess to trust in God, and yet lay up for future wants, otherwise the Lord will first send him to the hoard he has amassed, before He can answer the prayer for more. We were persuaded, that, if we laid out our money in the Lord's service, He would send more when we needed it; and this our faith, His own gift, He graciously honored, inasmuch as He not merely gave us what we needed, but much more (Narratives, vol. 1, pp. 61-62).*

***4. No Debt***

*I would just observe, that we never contract debts, which we believe to be unscriptural (according to Romans 13:8) and therefore we have no bills with our tailor, shoemaker, grocer, butcher, baker, &c.; but all we buy we pay for in ready money. The Lord helping us, we would rather suffer privation, than contract debts. Thus we always know how much we have, and how much we have a right to give away. May I entreat the believing reader, prayerfully to consider this matter; for I am well aware that many trials come upon the children of God, on account of not acting according to Rom. 13:8 (Narratives, vol. 1, p. 62).*

***5. No Temporary Use Of Designated Money***

*Muller regarded "any money which was in his hands already designated for, or appropriated to, a specific use, as not his to use, even temporarily, for any other ends" (Pierson, p. 76).*

***Freedom, Joy, And Revival***

*I would observe here, by the way, that if any of the children of God should think that such a mode of living leads away from the Lord, and from caring about spiritual things, and has the effect of causing the mind to be taken up with the question, What shall I eat? What shall I drink? and Wherewithal shall I be clothed? and that on that account it would be much better to have a stated salary, particularly for one who labors in the word and doctrine, in order that he may be above these cares; I say, should any believer think so, I would request him, prayerfully to consider the following remarks:*

***1****. I have had experience of both ways, and know that my present mode of living, as to temporal things, is connected with less care.*

***2****. Confidence in the Lord, to whom alone I look for the supply of my temporal wants, keeps me, at least whilst faith is in exercise, when a case of distress comes before me, or when the Lord's work calls for my pecuniary aid, from anxious reckoning like this: Will my salary last out? Shall I have enough myself the next month? &c. In this my freedom, I am, by the grace of God, generally at least, able to say to myself something like this: My Lord is not limited; He can again supply; He knows that this present case has been sent to me; and thus, this way of living, so far from leading to anxiety, as it regards possible future want, is rather the means of keeping from it. And truly it was once said to me by an individual, You can do such and such things, and need not to lay by, for the church in the whole of Devonshire cares about your wants. My reply was: The Lord can use not merely any of the saints throughout Devonshire, but those throughout the world, as instruments to supply my temporal wants.*

***3****. This way of living has often been the means of reviving the work of grace in my heart, when I have been getting cold; and it also has been the means of bringing me back again to the Lord, after I have been backsliding. For it will not do, it is not possible, to live in sin, and, at the same time, by communion with God, to draw down from heaven every thing one needs for the life that now is.*

***4****. Frequently, too, a fresh answer to prayer, obtained in this way, has been the means of quickening my soul, and filling me with much joy (Narratives, vol. 1, pp. 58-59).*

***Bristol And The Scriptural Knowledge Institute For Home And Abroad***

In 1832 Craik left to labor in Bristol, England. After much prayer, Muller felt led to resign his position in Teignmouth, and he joined Craik in Bristol. Gideon Chapel and Bethesda Chapel were acquired for the work, and the local brothers agreed to let Craik and Muller continue to live by faith. Pew rents were eliminated, and an offering box was set up in the back. Muller's journal contains this landmark entry on August 13, 1832: "This evening one brother and four sisters united with brother Craik and me in church fellowship at Bethesda, *without any rules, desiring only to act as the Lord shall be pleased to give us light through His word" (Narratives*, vol. 1, p. 73).

On February 21, 1834, Muller wrote, "I was led this morning to form a plan for establishing, upon Scriptural principles, an Institution for the spread of the Gospel at home and abroad. I trust this matter is of God" (*Narratives*, vol. 1, p. 80).

Other similar institutions already in existence were founded on what Muller considered unscriptural grounds, in that their funding and leadership were mingled with the world and unbelievers. They contracted debts to carry out their work and thus "trusted in the arm of flesh" and not in the living God, according to Muller's understanding of both the spirit and the letter of Romans 13:8.

After much prayer over this matter, his plan was announced in a public meeting on March 5. Seven principles and three objects of the new Scriptural Knowledge Institute for Home and Abroad were stated.

***Principles***

***1****. We consider every believer bound...to help the cause of Christ.*

***2****. We never intend to ask unconverted persons of rank or wealth to countenance this institution...."In the name of God we set up our banners" (Psalm 20:5).*

***3****. We do not mean to ask unbelievers for money.*

***4****. We reject altogether the help of unbelievers in managing...the affairs of the institution.*

***5****. We intend never to enlarge the field of labor by contracting debts...but in secret prayer...we shall carry the wants of the institution to the Lord, and act according to the means that God shall give us.*

***6****. We do not reckon the success of the institution by the amount of money given...but by the Lord's blessing upon the work.*

***7****. We desire to go simply according to the Scripture, without compromising the truth.*

***Objects***

***1****. To assist in day schools, Sunday schools. We consider it unscriptural that any person who does not profess to know the Lord themselves should be allowed to give religious instruction. The institution does not assist any adult school...except the teachers are believers.*

***2****. To circulate the Holy Scriptures.*

***3****. To aid missionary efforts. We desire to assist those missionaries whose proceedings appear to be most according to the Scriptures (Miller, pp. 38-39).*

**The Lord's Supply**

Muller had no money for this endeavor. However, based on the promises he found in the Bible, he fully expected that his prayers would be answered and God would supply. And God did supply. On June 3, 1835, Muller wrote,

*Today we had a public meeting on account of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad. It is now fifteen months, since, in dependence upon the Lord for the supply of means, we have been enabled to provide poor children with schooling, circulate the Holy Scriptures, and aid missionary labors. During this time, though the field of labor has been continually enlarged, and though we have now and then been brought low in funds, the Lord has never allowed us to be obliged to stop the work. We have been enabled during this time to establish three day-schools, and to connect with the Institution two other charity day-schools, which, humanly speaking, otherwise would have been closed for want of means. In addition to this, the expenses connected with a Sunday-school and an adult school have been likewise defrayed, making seven schools altogether. The number of the children that have been thus provided with schooling, in the day-schools only, amounts to 439. The number of copies of the Holy Scriptures, which have been circulated, is 795 Bibles and 753 New Testaments. We have also sent, in aid of missionary labors in Canada, in the East Indies, and on the Continent of Europe, ¢G117. 11s. The whole amount of the free-will offerings put into our hands for carrying on this work, from March 5, 1834, to May 19, 1835, is ¢G363. 12s. 0 3/4d (Narratives, vol. 1, pp. 99-100).*

**Orphan Houses**

This would seem to be quite enough to keep any servant of God fully occupied. But from Muller's journal we read the following:

*October 28. This afternoon brother Craik and I...heard there a most affecting account of a poor little orphan boy, who for some time attended one of our schools, and who seems there, as far as we can judge, to have been brought to a real concern about his soul, through what I said concerning the torments of hell, and who some time ago was taken to the poor-house some miles out of Bristol. He has expressed great sorrow that he can no longer attend our school and ministry. May this, if it be the Lord's will, lead me to do something also for the supply of the temporal wants of poor children, the pressure of which has occasioned this poor boy to be taken away from our school! (Narratives, vol. 1, pp. 86-87).*

It would be easy to think that Muller's only motive to open an orphan house was compassion for the plight of helpless children in an uncompassionate society. (Consider the description of this problem in the writings of a well-known contemporary, Charles Dickens.) But this was not Muller's first motive. He longed for a visible proof to show the Christians of his day that God is a living God who is faithful to His Word. He saw how believers lived by the same principles as unbelievers, selling their souls to the world and trusting the arm of flesh rather than the hand of God. He wanted to free them to live a scriptural life of faith.

Muller labored much in prayer concerning the opening of an orphan house. He feared acting outside the will of God or from wrong motives. He fellowshipped with brothers Craik and Chapman, and both were supportive. (See Fellowship Journal, vol. 2, no. 12, for more on Robert Chapman.) Finally he writes concerning his time of prayer on December 5,

*This evening I was struck, in reading the Scriptures, with these words: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Ps. lxxxi. 10. Up to this day I had not prayed at all concerning the means or individuals needed for the Orphan-House. I was now led to apply this scripture to the Orphan-House, and asked the Lord for premises, ¢G1000., and suitable individuals to take care of the children. December 7. Today I received the first shilling for the Orphan-House (Narratives, vol. 1, p. 106).*

Muller opened his mouth wide, claiming for himself the words that God had inspired the psalmist to write. God did indeed fill it. He sent money and goods for the new orphan house from far and wide. Muller's journal lists each offering, giving equal praise for every gift, both large and small.

***Send Children***

The first orphan house was for girls, ages seven to twelve, and Muller decided that the best premises were a large rented house, 6 Wilson Street. Everything was made ready to receive the first orphans in April 1836. Muller writes:

*So far as I remember, I brought even the most minute circumstances concerning the Orphan-House before the Lord in my petitions, being conscious of my own weakness and ignorance. There was, however, one point I never had prayed about, namely, that the Lord would send children; for I naturally took it for granted that there would be plenty of applications. The appointed time came, and not even one application was made (Life of Trust, p. 137).*

He immediately fell on his face before God and repented, asking God to supply orphans for the orphan house. He then writes, "The very next day the first application was made, and within a short time, forty-three applied" (Life of Trust, p. 137).

The need was too great for just one orphan house. Another was soon rented for infants and children below age seven (1836). Then another was rented for boys over seven (1837). Finally a fourth house was opened (1844). With each new house and each accepted orphan, the need for supplies grew. But God was faithful to His promises and answered Muller's daily prayers with daily bread.

***Time To Build***

Muller writes,

*On Oct. 30, 1845, I received from a gentleman, who lived in the street where the 4 Orphan-Houses were, a polite and friendly letter, in which he courteously stated to me that the inhabitants in the adjoining houses were in various ways inconvenienced by the Orphan-Houses being in Wilson Street. He left to myself the judgment of the case (Narratives, vol. 1, p. 439).*

This caused Muller to begin to pray about building.

Miracle after miracle from God gradually opened the way in answer to Muller's prayer. No advertising ever took place to stir up charity from man. A Christian architect volunteered his services to prepare the plans and superintend the construction at no charge. The owner of the land at Ashley Down, knowing that Muller had called on him twice concerning the land while he was out, put in a very restless night until he was willing to sell it at a significantly reduced price. Muller determined not to build until all the money was in hand, no matter how long it took. Thus the timing was up to the Lord.

Muller asked no one but God for financial help. He continued to pray, and God remained faithful to answer. Money came in by offerings large and small. In June of 1849, the new orphan house for 300 children plus their teachers and overseers opened at Ashley Down. In the same way, over the next 21 years, four more buildings were constructed out of Muller's faith and prayer. Once completed, the capacity of all five houses was 2,050 orphans plus the 112 helpers who cared for them.

*Year after year God is pleased to help us in the orphan work also, as well as with regard to the other objects of the Institution; and, in some respects, the help may appear even the more manifest, as the requirements are so large; for we require now for the support of the orphans and the keeping of the large buildings in repair the yearly sum of Twenty-Six Thousand Five Hundred Pounds and upwards, all of which we have to look alone from our Heavenly Father, who invariably has helped us. But He not only provides us with money, in answer to prayer, but He finds the assistants also, who are needed to take care of the orphans. We are also, every year, entirely dependent upon God when infantine diseases break out among the children. Just now, while I am writing this, many children are ill in the measles; but God helps, in answer to prayer. And thus it is in scarlet fever, so common to children, whooping cough, etc. I refer to this, because many of our friends may suppose, that money is almost all we want. We also need yearly very many suitable situations that both boys and girls may be placed out, as we only send them to Christian families. This often brings us in prayer to God, and has not a little exercised our faith. The training, however, of the orphans, above all, needs much prayer and much exercise of faith, and makes it continually necessary to go to the Lord for the needed wisdom; for, "who is sufficient for these things?" (Narratives, vol. 2, p. 509).*

*We all have our necessities of one kind or another, and every child of God has many things about which he has need to speak to God. And our gracious God speaks here to each one of His children: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it,"-now ask much at My hands, look for much from Me, bring great requests before Me. I am God, and not man; it is the very joy and delight of my heart to give abundantly....If we were allowed freely to make our requests before the Sovereign, we would be ashamed, or ought to be, to make only trifling requests. But the mighty ones of the earth are as nothing compared to Jehovah; and, if we would give joy to the heart of God, we must ask great things at His hand, and expect great things from Him. This is taught us in the figurative expression, "Open thy mouth wide"; and the promise is, "I will fill it." Let anyone act according to the exhortation, and most assuredly God will fulfill the promise. Let us look about, and see when in any measure we have been able to act according to this word, whether God was not as good as His word (Winks, p. 225).*

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| ***Controversy***  Muller was not without occasions of personal sorrow. In 1835 his infant son died; in 1841 his father died; in 1866, his beloved co-worker Craik died; in 1870 his first wife died; in 1890 his only daughter died; in 1894, his second wife died. Through all this, Muller trusted in God and His Word. He always believed that God knew what was best.  One of his greatest trials was the controversy that shook the Brethren movement around 1845. It is to Muller's credit that he never mentions this controversy in his journal. It is as though it never happened. Nevertheless, these events did have their impact in Bristol.  Many persons were involved in this controversy, but the most prominent were J. N. Darby and B. W. Newton of Plymouth, both leaders among the Brethren. Darby accused Newton of heretical teaching concerning the person of Christ. Who was right and who was wrong were not so much an issue as was the handling of this matter. Accusations flew back and forth, councils were called to investigate, and brotherly love all but disappeared. Newton's repentance made no difference. Darby eventually had Newton excommunicated, more by virtue of Darby's power, influence, and personality than by anything heretical that Newton had said. Moreover, Darby declared that everyone who fellowshipped with Newton in Plymouth was surely contaminated by his teachings, and so was excommunicated with him.  *In all the upheavals over Plymouth, one notable church had remained content to pursue its own course in quietness....Bethesda seems not to have been brought into the conflict by either party. Both Muller and Craik were occupied enough by the pressure of work at the orphan homes and by the flourishing churches under their care (Coad, p. 154).*  This isolation did not last long. In April 1848, a former member of Newton's Plymouth fellowship applied for communion in Bristol. After proper examination, he was received. Those sympathetic to Darby immediately protested, and soon the entire Bristol fellowship was suspect. Eventually an investigation was pursued.  *The conclusion of the investigation did nothing to better the case of Bethesda in the eyes of its accusers. The "independent" principle was still admitted; and...Darby's decree was still refused. Yet Darby himself wavered. In July, 1849, he called on Muller at "the New Orphan House, No. 1, ten minutes before one o'clock." They shook hands, and Darby said, "As you have judged Newton's tracts, there is no longer any reason why we should be separated." Muller answered, "I have this moment only ten minutes' time, having an important engagement before me; and as you have acted so wickedly in this matter, I cannot now enter upon it, as I have no time." Darby rose and left. They never saw one another again.*  *Of all the incidents in Darby's chequered career, this is distinctly the most damaging to his reputation, for he left Muller's presence only to enforce to the last letter the decree [against Bethesda] that he had just declared obsolete (Neatby, chap. 8).*  From this time, Darby became the leader of what developed into the "Closed" or "Exclusive Brethren," known for their exclusive attitude toward other brothers. The fellowship led by George Muller and Robert Chapman became what is known as the "Open Brethren."  ***Travels***  In his latter years (1875-1892), Muller turned the work in Bristol over to James Wright, his son-in-law and co-laborer, and made sixteen preaching trips to various parts of the world. Each trip, as well as the great work he left behind, was financed by faith in the heavenly bank alone.  Muller always traveled with his wife. Together they covered 200,000 miles in seventeen years of world-wide evangelism efforts, visiting 42 countries and preaching to three million people.  ***Death***  On January 13, 1894, his second wife passed away after 23 years of marriage. He was now 89 years old and living out his days in Orphan House #3. He preached his last sermon on Isaiah's vision March 6, 1898, at Alma Road Chapel in Clifton. He died on March 10, 1898. At his funeral in Bristol tens of thousands lined the streets. The grief of the orphans was evident. He was buried by the side of his two wives.  Muller opened his mouth wide, and God filled it. From the founding of the Scriptural Knowledge Institute in 1834 to his death, he received in answer to prayer a total of ¢G185,306 8s. 11d. Today, that would be over eighteen and a half million dollars. He died leaving an estate valued at less than one thousand dollars, for he had given to the Institute almost one-half million dollars of the personal gifts he had received during 70 years of ministry.  ***His Influence***  Muller's influence touched the lives of thousands-perhaps most notable was that of J. Hudson Taylor, missionary to China and founder of the China Inland Mission. Over 3,000 of Muller's orphans were won to Christ. His most moving reunion with an orphan was on October 19, 1878, when a 71-year-old widow met him. She had been his first orphan over 57 years previously. About 10,000 other orphans were to follow her there and have Daddy Muller rear them. Muller read the entire Bible over 200 times, half of these times on his knees. He said he knew of some 50,000 specific answers to prayer, requests to God alone, based on the promises he found in His Word. Watchman Nee says, "George Muller recovered the matter of praying in faith. He learned many excellent lessons concerning prayer and concerning faith in God's Word. He taught that man should claim God's promises through prayer, and he testified of his way of living by faith in relation to financial matters."  **Andrew Murray said of him:**  *Just as God gave the Apostle Paul as an example in his prayer-life for Christians of all time, so He has also given George Muller in these latter days as a proof to His Church how literally and wonderfully He still always hears prayer. It is not only that He gave him in his lifetime over a million pounds sterling, to support his orphanages, but he has also stated that he believed that the Lord had given him more than thirty thousand souls in answer to prayer.... The way George Muller walked is the new and living way to the Throne of Grace, which is open for us all (Murray, pp. 118-119).*  **Hudson Taylor recalled:**  *[I] had an hour with George Muller.... He spoke most preciously on the call and spirit of the missionary; on the consecutive reading of the Scriptures; on prayer and faith in God; on obstacles and thorn hedges....Mr. Muller spoke on communion with God being before work for God; on the need of not acting uncertainly; on mixing freely with the people, and restraining the speaking of English among ourselves (in the presence of Chinese who could not understand); and finally promised to pray for the party (Taylor, p. 60).*  *The George Muller Foundation still operates today under the same principle of faith established by George Muller, though it no longer operates orphan houses.*  *-Dave Shields*  ***Bibliography***  *Coad, F. Roy. A History of the Brethren Movement. Vancouver, Canada: Regent College Publishing, 2001.*  *Harding, William H. George Muller. Westwood, NJ: Barbour and Company, Inc., 1985.*  *Miller, Basil. George Muller. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1961.*  *Muller, George. Narratives & Addresses. 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