

Building for God and Orphans

by George Mueller

George Muller's faith and prayer led to the provision of funds and resources for the expansion of the orphan work, which ultimately cared for 2,000 children.

Scripture: Psalm 37:5, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 7:7, Mark 11:24, Luke 18:1, 2 Corinthians 9:8, Philippians 4:19, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Hebrews 11:1, James 1:4

Topics: "Faith", "Divine Provision"

Description

George Muller emphasizes the importance of faith and prayer in building an orphanage, recounting his journey of seeking God's provision for the needs of orphans. Despite initial discouragement and a lack of donations, Muller remained steadfast in prayer, believing that God would provide the necessary funds and resources. His faith was rewarded with significant donations and support, leading to the successful establishment of the orphanage that would house hundreds of children. Muller's unwavering trust in God's promises serves as a powerful testimony of divine provision and the impact of persistent prayer.

Transcript

GOD'S HOUR had finally arrived when Mr. Muller should step out on the divine promises and build. After weighing the complaint in the letter against the orphanage, on November 3, 1845, he laid the matter before the Lord.

This was a memorable occasion and concerning it he writes, "After I had spent a few hours in prayer...I began to see that the Lord would lead me to build, and that His intentions were not only to benefit the orphans...but also the bearing of further testimony that He could and would provide large sums...and that He would enlarge the work, so that if I once did build a house, it might be large enough to accommodate three hundred orphans."

The following day he and his wife proposed to meet morning by morning and pray about the building. "We continued meeting for prayer," he says, "morning by morning for fifteen days, but not a single donation came; yet my heart was not discouraged. The more I prayed, the more I was assured that the Lord would give the means."

On December 9, thirty-five days had passed, "whilst I was day by day waiting upon God for means for this work, and not a single penny had been given to me. Nevertheless this did not in the least discourage me, but my assurance...increased more and more."

This was the day that God gave him the text, "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

After having this text hung on the walls of his memory, he asked God to increase his faith and to sustain his patience. The following day came God's answer in the form of the largest donation he had received up to that time. It was a thousand pounds from a friend.

"When I received it I was as calm, as quiet as if I had only received one shilling," Mr. Muller tells us.

With this seal of God upon the work, his faith took a new grip upon the promises, and henceforth it was but a matter of waiting upon the Lord to send the funds. December 13 brought another gift more important than the first in the form of the free services of a Christian architect, who offered to draw the plans and superintend the building without payment. This was another proof that the Lord was directing Mr. Muller's prayers and intentions toward building.

Slowly the funds began to come in, though Mr. Muller had made no public announcement of his plan to build. He did not overlook the fact that if it required faith to care for a hundred and thirty children, which were then in the home, it would take greater faith to feed and clothe 300.

After the sixty-fifth day of prayer God sent a gift of fifty pounds, which was soon followed by another thousand-pound donation.

On January 31, 1846, Muller went to see a piece of land that seemed available for the building. This was the eighty-ninth day since he had begun to call upon God for a building, and he thought God would soon furnish suited grounds. He wanted about seven acres close to Bristol. God had the land which in due time, after a testing of faith, would be provided.

"Feb. 3. Saw the land..." he entered in his diary. The following day he began negotiations for the property. He went to visit the owner, but found that he was not at home. On the next day when he made an appointment with him, the owner said that about three o'clock he was awakened and could not sleep for two hours.

"While he was thus lying awake," Mr. Muller states, "his mind was all the time occupied about the piece of land...and he determined that if I should apply for it, he would not only let me have it, but for a hundred and twenty pounds an acre instead of two hundred, the price he had previously asked for it. How good is the Lord."

Thus Mr. Muller secured the land for \$2,800 less than he would have the night before.

After the land was bought, he continued his daily season of intercourse with God for funds. Step by step he waited upon the Lord to supply all that was needed in the construction of so large a building.

Gifts varying in size from a farthing to five and six hundred pounds made Mr. Muller's heart glad. On January 25, 1847, he entered in his diary, "Therefore with increased earnestness I have given myself unto prayer, importuning the Lord that He would...speedily send the remainder of the amount...and I have increasingly of late felt that the time is drawing near." This was fourteen months and three weeks after he first began asking God for a new building, and it was to be a grand day in the work of God. Let his words tell the story.

"I arose from my knees this morning full of confidence...About an hour, after I had prayed thus, there was given me the sum of two thousand pounds for the Building Fund. Thus I have received altogether £9,285 3s. 91/2d. Four hundred and forty-seven days I have had day by day to wait upon God before the sum reached the above amount."

When this princely gift came he was neither excited nor surprised, he "could only sit before God, and admire Him, like David in II Samuel, chapter 7." Finally he threw himself flat on his face and burst forth in thanksgiving to God and "in surrendering my heart afresh to Him for His blessed service."

Then came other gifts, among them two thousand pounds, followed by another of one thousand, and on July 5, 1847, when eleven thousand and sixty-two pounds had been donated, the building was finally begun.

This was after the help of the Lord had been daily sought for six hundred and seven days. As the building progressed funds increased until fifteen thousand, seven hundred and eighty-four pounds were received. The last

donation was for two thousand pounds from a man who brought the money in notes so that his bankers might not know of his liberality.

After the building was finished, all expenses met, trustees organized, there was a balance of £776, which afforded "a manifest proof that the Lord cannot only supply us with all we need in His service simply in answer to prayer, but that He can also give us even more than we need."

All of these gifts, it must be remembered, were wrestled from the hand of God through Mr. Muller's prayers. He prayed definitely and diligently. God answered just as specifically. In addition to praying in the building funds, Mr. Muller also bore the burden of caring for the houses on Wilson Street and their one hundred and thirty children. Never once did he despair of the Lord's willingness and ability to give. He knew he was centered in God's will, and asking and receiving were natural complements.

On July 21 he records asking God for four specific things: his own personal needs, for the building fund, for the orphanage on Wilson Street and for the Institution. A gentleman from Devonshire called upon him and made a donation of twenty pounds, specifying that it was for the four identical things about which he had been talking to God. "Thus I received, at the very moment that I had been asking God, four answers to my prayers."

On June 18, 1849, more than twelve years after beginning the work, the orphans were transferred from the rented houses on Wilson Street to the new house on Ashley Down. Throughout the year other children arrived until by May 26 of the following year there were 275 children in the house, the whole number of those connected with the institution being 308, who daily depended upon the prayers of Mr. Muller for their sustenance.

On Saturday, June 23, after moving to Ashley Down, God marvelously began supplying the needs. A man while walking through the home with Mr. Muller exclaimed, "These children must consume a great deal of provisions," and while speaking he drew from his pocketbook notes to the amount of a hundred. On the same day came six casks of treacle and six

loaves of sugar. Information arrived that a friend had just then purchased a thousand pounds of rice for the children.

"So bountifully has the Lord been pleased to help of late, that I have not only been able to meet all the extraordinary heavy expenses connected with moving...filling the stores...but I have more than five hundred pounds in hand to begin housekeeping in the new Orphan House...After all the many and long-continued seasons of great trial of faith for thirteen years and two months, during which the orphans were in Wilson Street, the Lord dismisses us from thence in comparative abundance. His name be praised."

So gracious had the Lord dealt with Mr. Muller that no sooner had he housed his children in their new home and filled it to capacity than his faith began reaching forth for larger quarters, so that he might care for a thousand children. This was in spite of the fact that each day had to be supplied through constant and long seasons of prayers. No great abundance of money was coming in to meet these daily needs.

On December 5, 1850, he wrote, "It is now sixteen years and nine months this evening since I began the Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad...It is so large that I have not only disbursed since its commencement about fifty thousand pounds sterling, but that also the current expenses...amount to above six thousand pounds a year. I did 'open my mouth wide' this evening fifteen years ago, and the Lord has filled it. The new Orphan House is filled by three hundred orphans...My labor is abundant."

Mr. Muller's heart was literally consumed with passion for God and orphans. Just before Christmas of 1850, he declared, "I have served Satan much in my younger years, and I desire now with all my might to serve God during the remaining days of my earthly pilgrimage. I am forty-five years and three months old. Every day decreases the number of days that I have to stay on earth. I therefore desire with all my might to work. There are vast multitudes of orphans to be provided for."

God burned upon his soul the idea of another and larger house each day, and he affirmed, "By the help of God I shall continue day by day to wait upon Him in prayer concerning this thing till He shall bid me act."

On January 14, 1851, he went over the old grounds once again for and against a new house to care for seven hundred more children, and as previously, faith prevailed, and he declared that God would enable him to carry it through.

A couple weeks later he affirmed that he did not doubt that God would be honored by his asking largely for this purpose; since it was his duty to enlarge his quarters. Accordingly he set the sum of £35,000 as the goal to be sought before beginning the work. In May of that year he let his intentions be known. Realizing that the amount was large, his heart leaped with secret joy, "for the greater the difficulty to be overcome, the more it would be seen to the glory of God how much can be done by prayer and faith."

At once gifts began to come in, the first being the sum of sixpence, the donation of an orphan. While reading Hebrews 6:15, "And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise," his heart was immediately uplifted. He had become somewhat discouraged with the slowness and the smallness of the gifts as they arrived.

The year 1851 was a test of his faith, but the following came as a triumph of his trust. In March of that year he was encouraged by a gift of £999, and when the accounts for the twelve months were closed the fund stood at £3,530, which included the seven hundred and seventy-six pounds left from the first building fund.

At this time 360 orphans were awaiting admission, and as applications arrived Mr. Muller's faith increased. For where there was a need he felt God would surely supply. At the beginning of 1853 several Christians

together promised approximately \$40,500 to be distributed among the various funds, \$30,000 of which was to go into the Building Fund.

Mr. Muller thus realized that there was no limit upon God's willingness and ability to provide large donations.

As the money increased, Mr. Muller began looking for a suitable building site, but when none was found close by the first house, he decided to construct two buildings instead of one. The first was to house 400 girls, and the other 300 boys. He had sufficient funds at hand to construct the first building, so he decided to proceed with the first house. There were at this time 715 orphans seeking admission to the home.

Donations came from practically every civilized nation on earth. Muller's "Narrative" had been translated into several languages and the story of his work had spread from country to country.

In spite of the large gifts that continued to flow in, he was a faithful servant in the smaller things. On October 12, 1852, he made this Journal entry: "By sale of rags and bones twelve shillings sixpence. I copy literally from the receipt book. We seek to make the best of everything. As a steward of public money, I feel it right that even these articles should be turned into money; nor could we expect answers to our prayers if knowingly there were any waste allowed in connection with the work."

In these times of larger vision and work, God led him day by day to trust for supplies. Speaking of two weeks during the Christmas holidays of 1852-53, he said, "We had nothing in advance of our wants. Means came in only as they were required for pressing needs. We ask no human being for help...We depend alone upon God."

While the work of building the new house was in progress, Mr. Muller continued to keep his requests before the Lord. Large gifts were sent in, one for \$15,000 and another for \$20,000. An offer was also received to fill the 300 large windows in the house with glass.

Of this incident Mr. Muller avows, "It is worthy of note that the glass was not contracted for this time, as in the case of the House already built. This, no doubt, was under the ordering of our Heavenly Father."

About a year before the building's completion approximately \$150,000 was on hand for the expense. At one time he was examining the 150 gas burners when he felt constrained to return home suddenly. On arriving he found a check for £1,000 from a person who "concluded it would be good and profitable to invest a little in the Orphan Houses."

Finally on November 12, 1857, just seven years after the idea had burned in Mr. Muller's soul, the New Orphan House, No. 2, was opened. He wrote on this day, "The long-looked-for and long-prayed-for day has now arrived when the desire of my heart was granted to me, to be able to open the house for four hundred additional orphans...How precious this was to me...having day by day prayed for a blessing for seven years."

When the house was opened there were left over in the fund for the third house a balance of approximately twenty-three hundred pounds. This sum was believed to be the earnest of the entire amount needed for the third building's construction. Accordingly his faith took hold of God for another building which would house three hundred children.

He had planned to build this by the first house, but when the time arrived to begin construction this seemed unwise. So the old search for a suited site began once more. After much searching and no little vexation a plot of eleven and a half acres across the road from the present buildings was secured. The price was high, more than \$16,000, but since it was so close to the other buildings it seemed wise to Mr. Muller to invest God's money in it.

Since there were so many applications for entry, it was decided to make this large enough to care for 450 children instead of the original 300, and in confirmation of this a gift shortly arrived for £7,000, to be followed afterward by another £1,700. Glass was again promised for the 309 windows, and on July, 1859, the builders began their work.

Many large donations came in, so that in May, 1861, Mr. Muller was able to announce that the sum of £46,666 had been donated for Houses No. 2 and 3, which exceeded the original amount prayed for by £11,666.

God's hand lavishly began to pour out funds to care for the children while the house was being constructed, for there was more than \$45,000 to the credit of the current expense fund before House No. 3 was occupied.

On March 12, 1862, the house was opened. This brought Mr. Muller great joy. He wrote about this event, "It was in November, 1850 that my mind became exercised about enlarging the orphan work from 300 to 1,000 orphans, and subsequently to 1,150...From November, 1850, to this day, March 12, 1862, not one single day has been allowed to pass without this contemplated enlargement being brought before God in prayer, and generally more than once a day.

"Observe then...how long it may be before a full answer to our prayers, even to thousands and tens of thousands of prayers, is granted...I did without the least doubt and wavering look for more than eleven years for the full answer."

Nor did God want the work to stop with the third house. After the House No. 1 was finished there was a balance of £776 in the building fund along with £500 for current expenses. When House No. 2 was completed the balance available for expenses was £2,292. When the last house was finished the balance on hand for current expenses was £10,309.

This does not include the amount of money necessary to carry on the work of the Scriptural Institution, whose expenses ran into the thousands of pounds each year. All of this was brought in through prayer alone.

"As in the case of No. 2," Mr. Muller states, "so also in the case of the New Orphan House No. 3, I had daily prayed for the needed helpers and assistants for the various departments. Before a stone was laid, I began to pray for this, and as the building progressed, I continued day by day to bring the matter before God."

Before the third house was completed such was the pressure for larger accommodations to make room for the hundreds of applications which came in, that Mr. Muller conceived of building two more houses to accommodate an additional 850 orphans, making the total 2,000.

He felt that God would have him improve his special talent of trust and faith for daily supplies and building funds by taking this new step in his spiritual pilgrimage. Once impressed that a course was the divine will,

Mr. Muller was never long in putting it into operation.

He knew but one course of procedure...to trust daily for supplies and believe daily for building funds. And this hand to mouth existence from God's hand to Muller's and the orphans' mouths -- had been so gracious for the long years past that Mr. Muller did not hesitate to step forth again on a venture that would within a short span of years provide a home for almost twice as many children as he then housed.

From "George Muller - The Man of Faith" by Basil Miller

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