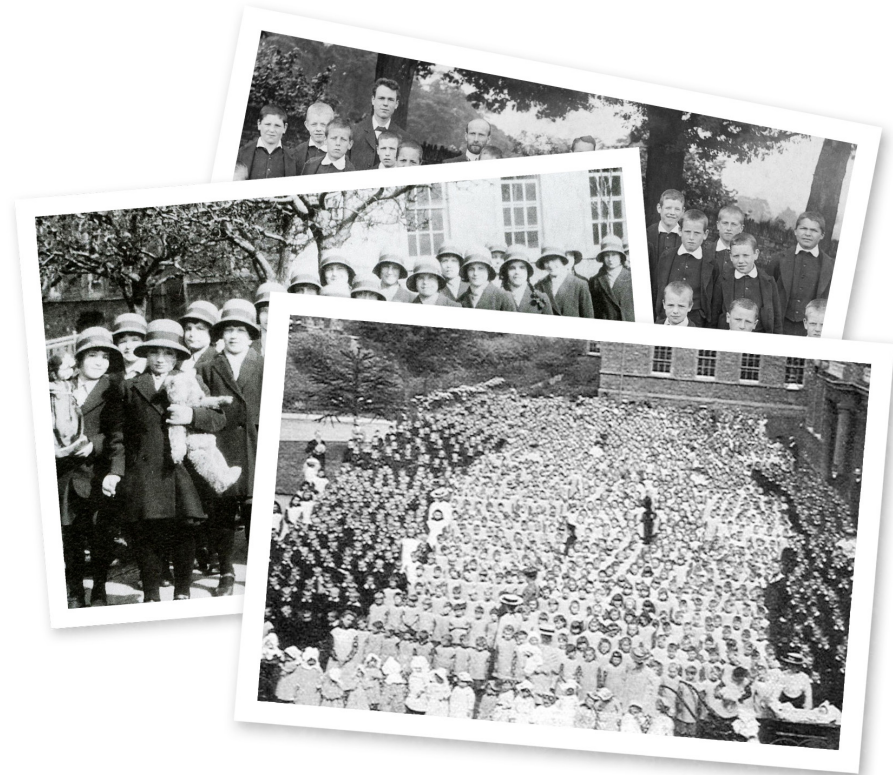


My business is, with all my might to serve my own generation; in doing so I shall best serve the next generation.



# George MÜLLER

Guided by his faith, George Müller established 117 schools that taught more than 120,000 children. He also cared for over 10,000 orphans, making a significantly positive impact in the lives of countless people.



## A Life of Dedication

Sometimes people make terrible choices. Sometimes, even if they are born to a loving mother and father, children choose to follow paths that take them away from the good things of the world and land them squarely in the midst of trouble, trouble, and more trouble.

In 1805, a boy named George was born in Kroppenstedt, Prussia, to a loving mother and father. Despite the good example set by his parents, he was drawn from a very young age to all the worst things that boys in those days could get themselves into.

If you were to follow young George as he snuck away from his house each morning, you would see him trampling the neighbor's rose bushes, charging after the fat tabby cat sunning herself peacefully on the porch, and picking the pockets of unsuspecting men as they opened carriage doors for young ladies—all before meeting up with his rugged and raucous friends for a day of drinking, smoking, and stealing.

You might see him spend the whole day gambling with money he had either stolen from strangers or cheated his friends out of. On especially bad days, you might see him take money from his hardworking father's wallet before he left the house—money he would use to pay off his gambling debts from the day before.

After watching George, it's entirely possible that you would decide that he wasn't a very good person. You might even think that he was pretty terrible. You would probably be shocked to learn that George was only ten years old—but it would be true.

By the time he was fourteen, he had become so hardened and immersed in riotous and wicked living that he didn't even bother to go home to see his sweet mother as she lay dying. He chose instead to spend the day drinking with his friends.

It would be easy to imagine that George was a lost cause and that someone so filled with love for the worst things life had to offer, who seemed to show so little care or compassion for others, would never amount to anything. But sometimes, just sometimes, people do change. Sometimes they awaken to their awful state and decide that they simply can't stand themselves for another moment and that something drastic must be done to turn things around.

And so it was for George.

## Turning a Page

On a not-particularly-remarkable day in 1825, George was invited to a friend's house for a prayer meeting. He later recalled, "Despite my sinful lifestyle and cold heart, God had mercy on me. I was as careless as ever. I had no Bible and had not read any Scripture for years. I seldom went to church; and, out of custom only, I took the Lord's Supper twice a year. I never heard the gospel preached. Nobody told me that Jesus meant for Christians, by the help of God, to live according to the Holy Scriptures."

But something happened in George's heart in the cramped living room on that not-particularly-remarkable day. George would forever count that prayer meeting as the day that everything began to change. He said, "I have no

doubt ... that He began a work of grace in me. Even though I scarcely had any knowledge of who God truly was, that evening was the turning point in my life.”

George’s father, thrilled at the change he saw in his son, hoped that he would continue on his newly righteous path and encouraged him to gain a religious education at the University of Halle. He secretly hoped that George would enter a life of service to God by becoming a clergyman, but he was happy just to see George interested in making something of himself.

While at Halle, George met a young woman who inspired him to continue making good choices and to keep drawing closer to God. He began studying scripture, praying regularly, and asking for forgiveness for what he now saw as the many sins he had committed against God and against his fellow man.

As George humbled himself, he felt the weight of his past mistakes being lifted from his shoulders. He felt alive, bright, and cheerful toward the whole world around him. He knew that even the most awful sinner could change his life and feel happy and hopeful, and he wanted to help other people feel as good as he did.

George had found his path.

He spent the next several years as a missionary, teaching the good things he had come to believe were true to anyone who seemed willing to hear his testimony. He worried about people who felt alone, sad, or hopeless—people like he had once been who didn’t see any way out of lives that brought them little happiness or peace. He was especially

concerned about children who didn’t have loving adults to lead and guide them.

## **George Müller’s Orphans**

George married Mary Graves in the fall of 1830 and settled into life as a preacher in a small town in England. After just a few months, he became uncomfortable with the salary his position offered him; he feared that his congregation was paying tithes and offerings out of duty rather than because they wanted to, and he didn’t think that was right. In fact, he didn’t like a lot of the mixing of money and religion that he saw.

At that time, wealthy families were able to secure the best pews in the chapel by paying a fee to the church each month, but George didn’t think that was right either. He felt that it gave the rich preferential access to the sermons being preached and didn’t believe that money or status should have any place in the worship of God, so along with renouncing his salary, he also ended the practice of renting pews.

Mary agreed with George, and his faith that the Lord would provide for them and their needs without an official salary would become the pattern for the rest of their lives.

In 1834, George founded the Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad. Its purpose was to distribute Bibles and religious materials to anyone who wanted them and included the opening of day schools, Sunday schools, and adult schools that provided education founded on scriptural principles. Within its first year, there were five day schools—two for boys, and three for girls.

George and Mary continued to refuse a salary, or any kind of government assistance.

The children, many of whom had suffered very difficult and lonely lives, were overjoyed to be in the care of people as loving and kind as George and Mary. They sang songs as they did their chores, played games in the street, and chased chickens in the yard. There seemed to be an unending stream of giggling children, walking in groups of three or four between the four homes that comprised the Müller orphanage.

George and Mary's hearts burst with pride and gratitude as they watched all of their children grow and thrive.

But not everyone loved life on Wilson Street. By 1845, some neighbors became frustrated with the constant noise and commotion of 130 children running up and down the streets, singing and laughing at all hours of the day and night. They began to complain to George and Mary that something must be done to restore peace and serenity to the neighborhood.

Although George and Mary didn't see how the sounds of happy children could annoy, they also respected and loved their neighbors. They didn't want their good work to be a source of irritation for others, so they began making plans to build a new orphanage.

The Müllers had never received a regular wage, and they had refused every offer of government assistance. They had determined early on in life that if they were good stewards of all they had, then the Lord would always provide for their needs, and they didn't intend to start asking for

money now. Things had always just seemed to work out for George and Mary, and they believed that they could continue to expect them to.

## **Blessings in Abundance**

When they needed plans drawn up for the new orphanage, an accomplished architect approached them and asked if they would accept his work for free. He had heard of the good things they had done, and he wanted to lend his time and talents to help.

One day, after paying all of their bills for the month, George and Mary found themselves unable to put food on the breakfast table. There was simply no money left. Never one to doubt or worry, George sat the children down to the empty table and bowed his head in prayer. He asked for a blessing on the food they would eat, and gave thanks for all he had been blessed with.

Just then, a man knocked on the door. It was the town baker! He had brought a large basket full of fresh baked bread. Moments later, the milkman came to the door. His cart had broken down right in front of the orphanage and, rather than risk his milk spoiling in the sun as he repaired the cart, he gave it all to George and Mary and the children. Oh how sweet that breakfast tasted, as George and all of his children reflected on the goodness of their God and their neighbors.

Once, on a cold winter's night, the boilers in the home stopped working. The thought of his children shivering in unheated rooms caused George much heartache, but de-



spite all of his efforts, the earliest any repairman would be able to come was the next morning. He and Mary tucked the children into bed with as many extra blankets as they could find and settled in for what they were sure would be a cold and difficult night. But something strange happened. As the children drifted off to sleep, the cold wind died down, the temperature outside rose, and a warm wind began to blow. It blew through the cracks in the windows and up through the floorboards, and the children slept peacefully—warm and cozy—all through the night. After the boiler repairman left the next morning, the cold and bitter wind returned.

In all, it cost the Müllers the equivalent of millions of dollars in today's terms in order to furnish their five homes, but they never asked anyone for donations, and they never went into debt. By 1849, the new orphanage was complete, and 300 more children entered into the watchful care of George and Mary Müller. George was always careful to give thanks for what he had and to credit the generosity of strangers and the answers to prayers for his ability to feed, house, and educate his many charges. He noted that he always wrote down his prayers, so that when, in His own time, the Lord answered them, he could be sure to record it as a blessing. His journals and autobiography are full of prayers and answers to prayers, with entries like this:

“A brother in the Lord came to me this morning and, after a few minutes of conversation gave me two thousand pounds for furnishing the new Orphan House ... Now I am able to meet all of the expenses. In all probability I will even have several hundred pounds more than I need. The Lord not only gives as much

as is absolutely necessary for his work, but he gives abundantly. This blessing filled me with inexplicable delight. He had given me the full answer to my thousands of prayers during the [past] 1,195 days.”

The blessings would continue to come, and George and Mary would continue to teach and house their orphans. George was a meticulous recordkeeper and budgeter, and the history of every donation ever given to his charity, along with every expense, is recorded in his autobiographical work. He wanted everyone who showed him generosity to know that their gift was being put to good and honest use.

Their work continued until 1870, when Mary died. At the time of her death, the Müllers had 1,720 children in their care and had sent countless more out into the world—armed with love-filled childhoods, life and spiritual knowledge, and apprenticeships, professional training, or jobs. George made sure that each child who left the orphanage left with the skills they would need for a prosperous and successful life. They were also each given a Bible and a trunk with two nice changes of clothes. And of course, they always knew that the doors to “home” and the loving embraces of Mary and George would be there whenever they needed them.

After Mary's death, George remarried and embarked on a new mission. At the age of seventy, he and his wife, Susannah, set out on what would become a seventeen-year mission trip. They taught the gospel in countries such as England, Scotland, Ireland, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Canada, France, Spain, Italy, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Hungary, Russia, Poland, India, Australia,

China, Japan, Singapore, New Zealand, Tasmania, and many others. In total, they visited and taught in more than 34 countries and traveled over 200,000 miles.

They never received a regular wage, they never took money from the government, and they never asked anyone to donate to their work.

George Müller died at the age of 87. He spent his life in selfless service to those who couldn't advocate for or help themselves. He protected the weak and innocent, and he gave hope to thousands who were otherwise hopeless. His life reminds us that we can always change, that it is never too late to be more than we were before, and that it is always worth our time and effort to show love and compassion to those who are suffering or in need.

As a young man, George would have been content to spend his life gambling, drinking, and stealing. But sometimes the universe has other plans for us, and we have to get down to the business of making ourselves into better people, so that we can do the important things we were meant to do. It's always worth the work it takes to be better than we used to be.