

King James Bible Study Correspondence Course

An Outreach of Highway Evangelistic Ministries
5311 Windridge lane ~ Lockhart, Florida 32810 ~ USA

Women Heroes of the Faith
Lesson 3A Mary Groves Müller
(Wife of George Müller, founder of the Bristol Orphanage)

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Born: 1797

Died: February 6, 1870

Married for 39 years and 4 months

On March 14, 1898, tens of thousands of people lined the streets of Bristol, England, to pay their respects to a man during his funeral procession. With that many people you might think the man had been a member of the royal family, or a great political figure, or a wealthy businessman. But no, he was none of these. In fact, he was referred to as a “robber” – “a robber of the cruel streets”! His name was George Müller.

Why would thousands of people attend the funeral of a robber? Well, this was no ordinary robber. In fact, The Daily Telegraph described George Müller as having robbed the cruel streets of thousands of victims and the workhouses of thousands of helpless neglected children. He did so by founding an orphanage rescuing thousands of children from wretched lives in the streets of England.

Mr. Müller was not alone in his work of robbing these streets. The old saying, “Behind every great man is a great woman” was certainly true in this case. Mr. Müller could not have rescued so many children had he not had a faithful dedicated wife. When God created the woman for the man, He had a specific role for her to play – she was to be a helper (Genesis 2:18) *And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.* George Müller’s wife, Mary, demonstrated this perfectly throughout their entire marriage and ministry.

Mary Müller’s maiden name was Mary Groves. She met George while she was working for a Mr. and Mrs. Hake as superintendent of all their household matters. She and George were married on October 7, 1830, thus beginning her role as helper to Mr. Müller. To really understand the magnitude of what Mary Müller did to be a help to her husband, we must first learn about him and the great work he accomplished for the Lord.

George Müller was born on September 27, 1805, in Prussia (current day Germany.) In the years of his youth, George was far from a dedicated servant of the Lord. In fact, he was quite the opposite. He spent his youth living in sin and selfishness. His mother died when he was fourteen; his father struggled to keep the rebellious boy out of trouble. George became involved in gambling, drinking, swindling, cheating, and stealing. He knew how to

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deceive people, thereby taking advantage of them for his own benefit. At one point he was even put in prison for his activities. That did nothing to change him though – his sinful ways only seemed to heighten. In his own words, George described his life as “wretched” with “no sorrow of heart on account of offending God.” His destructive behavior continued as he pursued studies at the University of Halle. Years later he would look back on these times and describe them as follows: “I had no enjoyment in it and had sense enough left to see, that the end one day or other would be miserable.” These feelings likely contributed to his acceptance of an invitation to a Bible study from a fellow university student. George found the Bible study to be very different from any church service he had ever been to, and years later in his journal, he recorded the following description of that event:

“We went together in the evening. As I did not know the manners of believers, and the joy they have in seeing poor sinners, even in any measure, caring about the things of God, I made an apology for coming. The kind answer of this dear brother I shall never forget. He said, Come as often as you please; house and heart are open to you. We sat down and sang a hymn. The brother Kayser, now a missionary in Africa, in connection with the London Missionary Society, who was then living at Halle, fell on his knees and asked a blessing on our 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. He then read a chapter and a printed sermon: for no regular meetings for expounding the Scriptures were allowed in Prussia, except if an ordained clergyman was present. At the close 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. I was happy; though, if I had been asked why I was so happy, I could not have clearly explained it. When we walked home, I said to Beta, All we have seen on our journey to Switzerland, and all our former pleasures, are as nothing in comparison with this evening. Whether I fell on my knees when I returned home, I do not remember; but this I know, that I lay peaceful and happy in my bed that evening was the turning point in my life.

The next day, Monday, along with twice besides, I went again to the house of this brother, where I read the Scriptures with him and another brother; for it was too long for me to wait till Saturday came again.”

A great change had taken place in George, and his life would never again be the same. He became devoted to learning the Scriptures and growing in his relationship with the Lord. He desired nothing more than to serve the Lord all his days; therefore, he felt that he should become a missionary.

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His father was very displeased with this decision as such a calling would mean a meager salary at best. In demonstration of his displeasure, he stopped paying for George's university education. This left George in a position that would perfectly prepare him for the ministry he would eventually undertake - he was forced to lean solely upon God to supply his need and make it possible for him to continue his education. He prayed, and God answered. God provided free room and board, as well as a tutoring job that paid very well. Thus began a life of complete dependence upon God for every need, and this dependence upon God would be a critical aspect of his future.

After completing his studies at the university, George moved to London, England, where he pursued his goal to be a missionary. While there he experienced numerous obstacles. Was God trying to point him in a different direction? George prayed for clear guidance, and God gave it. A struggle with ill health caused him to travel to the countryside for some fresh air. He ended up in a small country town called Teignmouth, where he met a Christian man, Henry Craik. Sometime later both he and Mr. Craik were directed by God into the work of pastoring two churches together in Bristol, England.

It was before this move, however, that he met the remarkable Mary Groves. Mr. Müller saw in Mary the qualities that would be of great value to his ministry. She was hard working, unselfish, and, like him, devoted entirely to following God's will for her life. Shortly after George and Mary were married they moved to Bristol, England.

Mary's willingness to support and help her new husband was soon put to the test, as George began feeling guilty about receiving a salary for his ministry as a pastor. He decided to pastor his churches with no salary, depending solely upon the Lord to meet their needs. Though it would have been a frightening prospect, Mary supported her husband in this decision. They were learning to trust God for everything, a lesson that would serve them well in the future.

In addition to pastoring the two churches, George had a deep and abiding desire to help all people learn the Bible, both the wealthy and the poor. He came up with a way to do so, an institution where the Bible would be thoroughly taught free of charge to anyone who was interested. He called it The Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad. There were three main goals for this ministry:

1. To assist day schools, Sunday schools, and adult schools in teaching the Bible;
2. To distribute Bibles to anyone who needed one;
3. To financially help those involved in foreign missions.

There would be no soliciting for funds to support this ministry. Consistent with his conviction that he should not receive a salary, George

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believed the Institution ought to be run through total dependence on God to supply money, Bibles, and any other needs there might be. It was a success because God was truly in it. By the end of his lifetime, 117 schools for Bible instruction had been established; 282,000 Bibles had been given out, as well as 1,000,500 New Testaments and missionaries all around the world had received financial and prayer support. Such a ministry took much time, prayer, and dedication from George. Mary was always right there with him offering support, encouragement, and prayers of her own, which helped George greatly.

While things were going well in the two churches and in the Scriptural Knowledge Institution, George began to recognize a serious need in the lives of the Christians - they lacked complete faith in God to meet all their needs. This greatly burdened him, and he wondered how he could help these men and women grow in their faith in God. At this same time, the Lord brought something else to his attention - the orphaned children living on the streets of Bristol. The conditions of cities in those days were breeding grounds for disease and other corruptions which claimed the lives of many adults, leaving children alone to fend for themselves on the streets. If they were not on the streets, they were forced to work in the deplorable conditions of the workhouses.

George developed a great compassion for these young ones. He spoke of this burden to Mary and together they prayed, seeking God's direction as to how they could help these children. God finally placed upon their hearts the desire to start an orphanage. This would be a great challenge. Having an orphanage would mean they would have to provide for all the needs of these children - their food, clothing, education, and their housing. Where would George and Mary find the means to pay for all of this? As they did with other areas of life, they simply prayed for God to provide. In fact, they believed that by not making their needs known to anyone, but by simply relying on God through prayer to supply their needs, they could be an example to the other group of people George was burdened about those who were struggling to fully trust God. George and Mary had lived this way already, so it was nothing new for them; it was simply living by faith on a new level.

On April 11, 1836, after much prayer and preparation, a little girl named Charlotte Hill became the very first orphan at their home on Wilson Street in Bristol. Before long they had thirty girls and were running out of space. Again George and Mary prayed earnestly and sought God's direction, as He led them to a thirteen acre piece of land called Ashley Down and provided the necessary money for the purchase of the land. Over the next several years George and Mary were able to build five buildings, allowing them to house a total of 2,000 boys, girls, and infants at a time. Of course with that many

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children, George and Mary needed others to assist them. They prayerfully hired several individuals who served as teachers, nurses, and housing parents. The money to pay the salaries for these workers was brought in by George and Mary's prayers to God alone. Never did they appeal to any person for help.

The orphan buildings at Ashley Down were spacious, bright, and cheerful and had many windows to let in the sunshine. There were dining rooms, bedrooms, schoolrooms, and playrooms. The walls were decorated with Scripture and other edifying quotes. The bedrooms had cupboards for each of the children where they kept their shoes, socks, and neatly folded clothes. The boys were provided with three suits of clothes that included blue jackets, white shirts, and corduroy pants. They each had three pairs of shoes and socks which they were taught to knit themselves. Every girl had three blue frocks and pinafores, a coat, three pairs of shoes, a pretty lilac dress for Sundays during the warm season's and a brown merino wool dress for cooler Sundays. The girls were taught to make their own clothes.

George and Mary Müller desired for the children to have a thorough, high standard education. In fact, the Victorian society of the day found fault with them for educating the orphans above their station in life, but such criticism did not sway them. The children were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar, English history, general history and geography. In addition the girls were taught household work, needlework, exercises, and singing; and the boys were taught exercises, gardening, and wood work. At the age of fourteen, the boys were apprenticed to Christian masters. At the close of the school day, all the children sang a cheerful song as they filed out of the schoolroom in orderly fashion. The children were also taught how to help with the work around the orphanage through age appropriate chores.

It was not all work and no play. The Müllers provided playrooms with toys and outdoor playgrounds with swings, jumping boards and other equipment. There were opportunities for country walks and picnics, and the boys played cricket and other games in the fields nearby. Those times were thoroughly enjoyed by all.

With two thousand children to care for and educate, a strict schedule was necessary to ensure that things ran smoothly. There were set times for rising and sleeping, meals, school, play, and, most importantly, for spiritual instruction, Bible reading and study. Meals were simple but healthy. They included staples such as oatmeal, various meats, milk, fruit, bread, and eggs. The children were called to mealtime by a big bell in the tower of House #1 they never ate a bite until the Lord had been thanked for His provision.

Notes

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7. What were the three main goals of the scripture knowledge institute?
 - a.
 - b.
 - b.
8. After George Müller told his father of his decision of becoming a missionary, what did George's father do?
9. Using your answer to question 8, explain what decision George had to make that stayed with him and Mary throughout their ministry?
10. When and how was George brought to salvation in the Lord?
11. How was Mary employed when George met her?

True/false

- George Müller was able to accomplish all those great things because Mary made all the major decisions.
- Mary Müller was a model of Genesis 2:18.
- Mary was hard working, unselfish, and devoted to doing things God's way.



Scripture Memorization: copy the following verses on the back:
Isaiah 26:3, Psalm 62:8, Jeremiah 33:3 (Must be in KJV)

any questions?