

The Life of George Muller

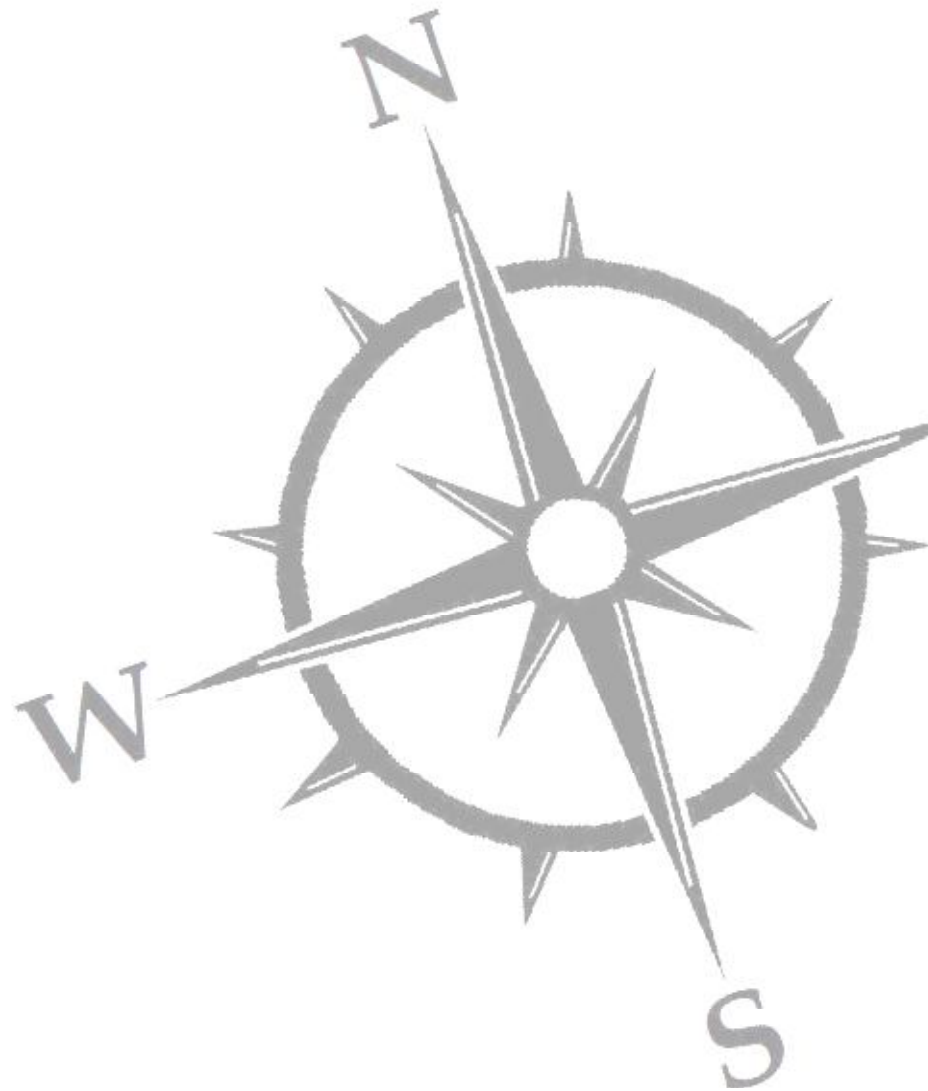
(1805-1898)

Lesson: 1.9 – Trust

Missionary Spotlight Series

This story reminds us that we can trust in what God has promised. Others may break their word and disappoint us, but God will not fail to keep every promise He has ever made. God promises to always be with us and protect us as Christians. George Muller was determined to trust in what God was doing, even when others around him doubted.

“In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.” - Psalm 56:4







Who remembers where we left off last week?

(Read the last paragraph from last week's lesson to begin this lesson as a review).

I got a letter from some of the neighbors on Wilson Street which gave me the idea of building an orphanage on the outskirts of town. We had prayed for God to show us if this was the right decision. God had provided the money, and then He had provided an architect who was willing to work for free to design and help us build the orphanage. Now God had moved in Mr. Hazelwood's heart to sell us land for much cheaper than he could have charged.

It was three years later when the building was finally completed. It had been a rough three years. England had gone through some rough economic times. Bread and rice had doubled in price. Oatmeal had tripled in price and potatoes had become so expensive that no one even ate them. This terrible time in England made even more orphans on the

streets. I was glad that our new orphanage would hold 300 children. Since we only had 120 children in our four houses on Wilson Street, this meant that we would be able to take in many more children in our new house.

Finally the day many in Bristol had waited for arrived. On June 18, 1849, the orphans lined up in two straight lines, and all together we marched up the hill to their new home on Ashley Downs. The children ran through the building with wide eyes. "Is this wonderful place just for us?" one little orphan boy asked me. "Everything you see is a reflection of God's love for you," I told him.

It took a total of four days to move all the furniture from the houses on Wilson Street to the new orphanage. When we were all moved in I stood out front and looked at the building. Many had said that I was crazy. They said there was a limit as to how much even Christian people would give. Yes, there were limits as to how much people would give, but the orphanage was a perfect example to me that there was no limit to the amount of money that God would provide.

We had many visitors to our orphanage the first few months it was open. One day, a famous author named Charles Dickens arrived unannounced. He said that he had heard rumors that the children lived in rat-infested rooms and were forced to work like slaves and not given much to eat. I had heard rumors like this before, but I knew that there would always be people who tried to say bad things when God was doing something wonderful. I gave a set of keys to one of my

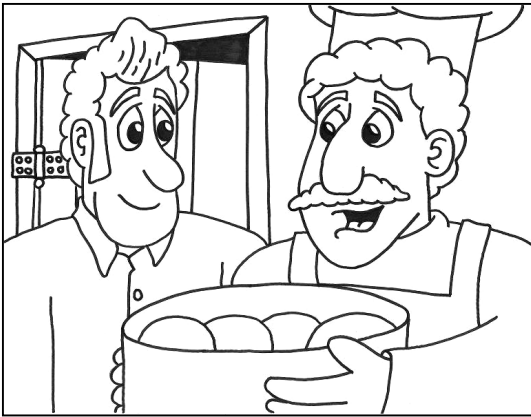
assistants and told him to show Mr. Dickens all around the orphanage and to open any door he wanted to see behind. Charles Dickens came back at the end of the day and told me all the rumors were wrong and that he would write a story that told everyone how wonderful the orphanage was.

Word began to spread around all of England about what God had done. The good thing was that many people now saw a clear example of what God could do in people's lives if they had the faith to trust Him. The bad thing was that people all over England began sending children to us. Many children arrived with nothing more than a note pinned to their shirts that said "to the orphan man in Bristol" on it. I couldn't send them away to the poorhouse, and soon I had a waiting list with over 300 children on it. Once again, I knew something had to be done.

I prayed and asked God to show me what I should do next. Within a day or two, I got a check in the mail for three thousand pounds. I took this as a sign that God wanted me to build another building. I figured it would cost about thirty-five thousand pounds to build the second building. Once again, money began coming in. This time I began receiving letters and money from all over the world from people who had read my book. I also received many packages filled with jewelry or china. We would sell these things and use the money for the new building. This reminded me of back when Mary and I had sold all of our china after we were first married.

In November of 1857, the Number Two Orphan house was finished and a third





to come and repair the boiler. That whole week before, a freezing wind had been blowing steadily. I kept hard in prayer that God would change the wind and that He would help the workers to get the boiler repaired quickly. "It's a miracle," said Eric as I walked up to greet the crew on the morning of December 9th. It was true the wind had changed directions and this morning the weather was warm. If this kept up, we would not need the heat on.

The men got to work. They ended up deciding to work through the night because it was for the orphans. By the next morning, the repairs were done and they were putting things back together. Once again, I thanked God for watching over the orphans. Not one of them even felt at all cold, and the repairs had been done much faster than we had originally thought.

By 1862, I had two assistants to help me. Jim Wright helped me to run the Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad, and John Townsend helped with the church work and Sunday Schools. We had also begun work on a Third Orphan House that would hold 450 children.

One day, there was a knock at my office door. "Excuse me...Mr. Muller, we have a big problem. I have three hundred children in the dining hall of Number One Orphan House who are all ready for breakfast, but we have nothing to feed them. The cupboards are all empty, and we have no money to buy food. What should I do?"

"I'll be there in just a minute," I told the worried staff member before going out into the backyard. Out back, I found my young

daughter Abigail. "Abigail, I want you to come and see something," I told her. "Come and watch what the Lord is going to do for us today."

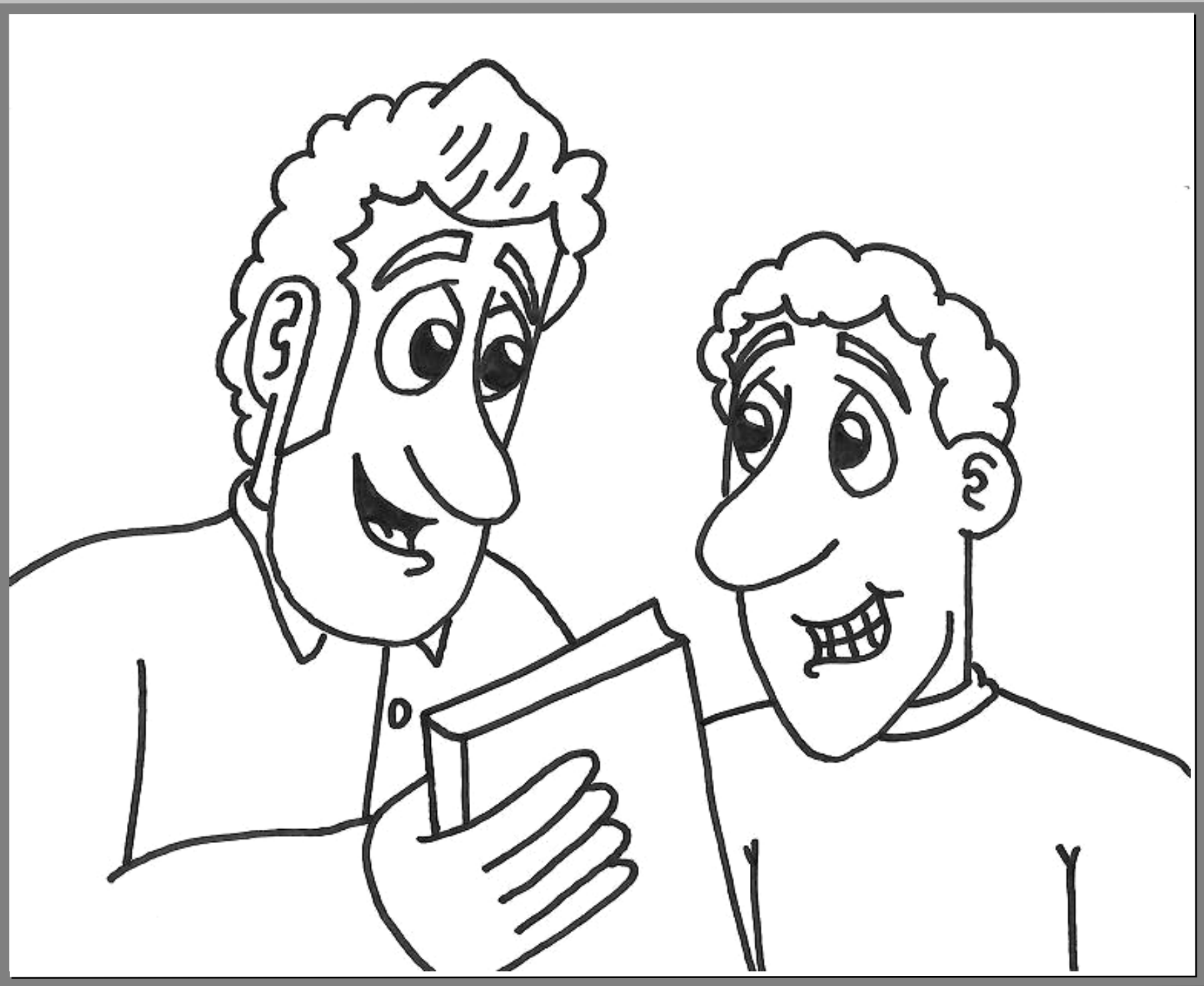
As I stood in front of the three hundred orphans in the dining hall at Number One Orphan House, I knew one thing for sure. Our plates and cupboards were empty, but I knew that the Lord was about to do something wonderful. "Where is the food, daddy?" Abigail asked while looking around at everyone's empty plates. "God will provide for us," I told her. I then had everyone bow their heads, and I thanked God for the food He would provide for us. I said "Amen," and no sooner had the children sat down when we heard a loud knock at the side door.

I opened the door and there stood the baker. "Mr. Muller, I couldn't sleep last night. I kept feeling like you might need some bread, sir. So I got up at 2 o'clock this morning and made you three batches. I hope you can use it," he said. I thanked him and gave the children some fresh bread. A few minutes later there was a second knock at the door. This time the milkman was there. He explained that his milk wagon's wheel had broken right out in front of the orphanage and that he needed to take the milk off the wagon to fix it. He asked if I could use ten full cans of milk. I thanked him and sent some orphan boys out to help him unload the milk and bring it inside. Abigail got to watch firsthand how the Lord provided time and time again for us.

One afternoon, we had a visitor come to Ashley Downs named Hudson Taylor. Hudson had formed something called the

building was being started. With things growing bigger, we did run into some problems at times. One day, Eric, our maintenance man came into my office. "Sir, we have a problem with the boiler in Number One House," he said. The boiler is what made the heaters work in the entire orphanage. Eric told me that it had a bad leak. The problem was that it would take at least two days to take things apart and try to find the problem. If it was summertime, it wouldn't be a problem, but it was December and there was snow on the ground. "What should we do?" I wondered. If the boiler was shut down for several days, the house would get too cold for the young children. If we ended up needing a new boiler, it could be a couple of weeks before we could turn it on again. On top of that, I had nowhere to put 300 children for a couple of days while it was being fixed. So I did the only thing I could think to do...I prayed about it!

I knew this had to be taken care of or the whole boiler could break and we would lose heat for many weeks. So on December 9, 1857, I arranged for several workers to





China Inland Mission and he was taking 26 other missionaries throughout China sharing the gospel. Secretly, I kind of wished that Mary and I could go too, but I knew the Lord had given us a mission field right here in Bristol.

The following January was a sad time for me. My good friend and faithful partner for 36 years passed away. Henry Craik had been a very dear friend to me and I knew I would miss him.

Four months later, in May of 1866, we started work on a fourth orphan house. That house was completed in November of the following year. Right away, we began work on a fifth House. By 1870, we had five orphan houses and cared for 2050 children!

Every child who came to the orphanage had their own story of how they came to be there. One boy I remember was named William Ready. William was born in a poor house in 1860. His mother and father both passed away soon after and he and his brothers and sisters became orphans. They begged to be able to leave the poor house. Finally, they made up a fake story about a

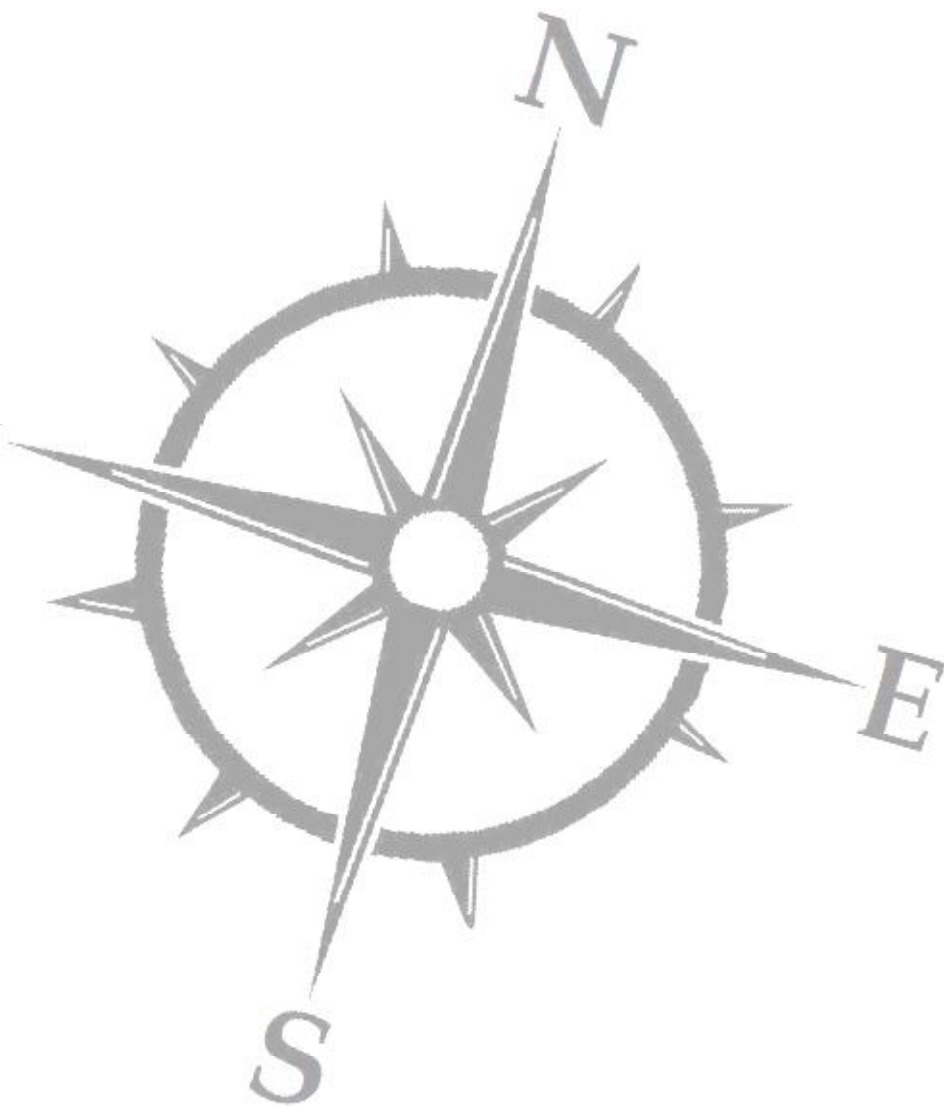
relative waiting for them and they were let out of the poorhouse. For years they lived on the streets. William said many times they ate banana peels, and even cigar butts just to have something on their stomach so that it wouldn't hurt so badly. Somehow he survived to be 12 years old. One day, a Christian man noticed William and asked him if he wanted to go to an orphanage. William agreed and a few days later he was at Ashley Downs and had been scrubbed head to toe and given a haircut. He was made to wear a uniform and said he felt like a stuffed chicken. But soon William began to love life at Ashley Downs. He was made to go to school for the first time, but eventually, he was one of the top students in the school. Mr. French found him an apprenticeship to become a flour miller. William was given three new sets of clothes and then came to my office as each orphan did before we sent them off into the world.

"Well lad, it's time for you to leave us," I said. I opened my desk drawer and pulled out a half-crown coin and walked over to where William was sitting. "Hold out both of your hands lad," I said. I picked up a Bible and put it in William's right hand and the coin in his left hand. "You can hold on more tightly to something in your right hand than you can with your left hand, is that right?" I asked. William nodded. "Well, wherever you go remember this. If you hold tightly to the teaching of the Bible, God will always give you something in your other hand to hold as well." Then I prayed for William, shook his hand, and wished him the best in his life ahead. I watched William walk out of the

orphanage door for the last time. Little did I know at the time, but William and I would meet again many years later and thousands of miles from Bristol.

Where do you think they will meet? To find out come back next time.

*(For additional information, discussion questions, and materials on this lesson please refer to lesson 1.9 on **page 136** in your England Expedition - Leader's Guide).*



References

For further reading or to obtain more information on this portion of the life of this missionary, please consult the following sources from which we obtained our information:

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