



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Various Scripture Passages

"George Mueller, Believers Chapel, and the Life of Faith" TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Well, the topic for our study tonight is "George Mueller, Believers Chapel, and the Life of Faith". And I'm going to read Psalm 23 verse 1 through verse 6 for two reasons. One, because it has special reference to George Mueller and the ministry carried on in Bristol. But it also was one of the last passages that he himself expounded in a public meeting in the church in Bristol. So we'll just read verse 2 through verse 6 or Psalm 23.

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul, he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name sake. Ye, thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou annointest my head with oil. My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

"George Mueller, Believers Chapel and the Life of Faith" by S. Lewis Johnson
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I think that's such a fitting passage for Mr. Mueller to expound in the last year of his life. In the last year or so he had stopped preaching on Sunday evenings and went out of his custom to expound Psalm 23 in the last year of his life in the evening service. "George Mueller, Believers Chapel, and the Life by Faith".

Mueller's life is perhaps the greatest example of the life of faith in modern times. It's remarkable when we think of the way in which Bristol, England responded to the death of George Mueller the whole city in effect had something of a holiday. Many many people were there for his funeral. In fact, Bethesda Chapel was so filled no one could get in, and on the outside also. And then around the church there was a large crowd. And finally, in the cemetery where Mr. Mueller was buried there were seven thousand people who were there for the funeral of this man.

It's remarkable to read some of the testimonies to him in the ordinary newspapers of the British Isle: The London *Times*, Manchester Papers, Bristol Papers, other papers also gave special coverage for the life and ministry of George Mueller. As you probably know, at the conclusion of Mueller's life there were over two thousand orphans that were in the Bristol orphanages and there were also two hundred workers who were workers in the orphanage, and all of them were supplied by the funds that were literally prayed down by Mueller and others for that work in Bristol. Never was an appeal for funds ever made. And always Mr. Mueller went to the Lord and the result was a magnificent testimony to trust in God.

In fact, in one way we could say that Mueller was a kind of New Testament times Abraham or an Elijah with a doctrine of the Apostle Paul because he lived in New Testament times, of course. For his lifetime, and you must remember that pounds in the 19th Century were much more valuable than the pounds today just as the dollars of the last century are so much more than the dollars of today. But in the 19th Century a million and a half pounds was given for the orphanages and five hundred thousand pounds for the Scriptural Knowledge Institute. The Scriptural Knowledge Institute is not known so

well, of course, as the orphanages. But you can see it was a large work and had a number of different outreaches in the ministry of the word of God with Bibles, with missionary endeavor. The Scriptural Knowledge Institute was probably the primary supporter of the China Inland Mission for a number of its earlier years. And so what Mr. Mueller did was not simply a work in Bristol, but a work that literally reached over the world. They were support I believe at one time a hundred and thirty missionaries of the China Inland Mission. And most of the people in the earlier work of the mission were supported through the work in Bristol by Mr. Mueller. That's one of the reasons, of course, that the China Inland Mission never made any appeal for funds. They operated on the same basis that Mueller did.

And I remember when I first became a Christian and became acquainted with the China Inland Mission, which now I think is known as the Overseas Mission. The China Inland Mission was the mission that everyone knew as the largest of the faith missions and also the one that made no appeals whatsoever for funds. Those seemed like ancient times with the way the Christian Church has come since then.

Well, what I'd like to do is to say a few words about the life of George Mueller, and then say some things about Believers Chapel in the light of it, and finally a few words about the life of faith. But we'll devote most of the time to George Mueller.

Mr. Mueller was German. Mr. Mueller was born in east Prussia in a place called Kroppenstadt. And he was born in 1805, he died in 1898. So he lived to be ninety years of age and was preaching in his ninety-second year also on Psalm 23 verse 1 through verse 6. He was in his earlier years just what you might expect. He was the son of a father who had a fairly responsible position, but right at the beginning of his life he was caught stealing by his father from the funds of his father. He also was in prison at sixteen years of age because he had borrowed funds, and did not pay them back and finally found himself in prison. And his father got him out of the prison.

He then studied at the Gymnasium as all fairly well to do Germans do and graduated from the Gymnasium in 1822 with debts and some other things. He also did a few things that were rather strange. But at the conclusion of his training in the Gymnasium, which is the equivalent, as probably most of you know to the first year of university. That meant that he had three more years of university. So he went to the University of Halla [phonetic] and there he went through the university, he had money problems again, he made a trip down to Switzerland he got a number of his friends together to share the trip with him. But he was handling the money so the result was that they largely paid for his trip. He was able to do that. Obviously he was very clever individual.

But after the trip to Switzerland he came into contact with a man who had enough of an influence upon him to get him interested in spiritual things and he was converted. And in his conversion there was, of course, a tremendous change in him. He became acquainted with August Tallac who was one of the great Evangelical university professors in theology. As a matter of fact Charles Hodge, who was for many years Professor of Theology at Princeton Seminary but perhaps one of the one, or two, or three leading theologians of the United States in the 19th Century studied with Professor Tallac there in Holland.

He came into contact with him and Professor Tallac had an influence upon him. And after his conversion he finally became a missionary to the Jews in the city of London. He was at one time thinking about going to Austria to do work that but it finally turned out that he came to London. Well, after had been there he became disenchanted with the work in London. He incidentally was an excellent student of language. He was an excellent student of Hebrew and Greek. He knew about six or seven languages, I've forgotten the precise number. But he was able to preach in French, and in German, and I believe also in Spanish, as well as English; thou of course his native language was German.

After he came to London he became ill at one point in his life there, and it was in the early years of his ministry. He decided as a result of his health that he should go somewhere and rest. He did this incidentally a couple of times in his earlier years of his life. At one point his health was not real strong, but while he was in a little place called Teignmouth in Southern England the thought developed that he perhaps should give himself to a different kind of ministry. And so he began to think about such things as the supreme authority of the Scriptures. He had been taught in a kind of background, which was not absolutely clear and plain.

But while he was thinking over these things he came to believe that the proper attitude towards Scripture was to take it as the supreme authority of God through the Holy Spirit and therefore he would rest upon what Scripture said. He also became very much interested in the doctrine of divine election. And in the course of the study of the doctrine of divine election he came to understand the grace of God in election in a very very clear way. In fact, he came to believe in unconditional election.

He also had been a post-millennialist as a result of his training previously. But through his study through this time in Teignmouth he became pre-milennialist. It was like a second conversion. So one of the biographers of Mueller's life has said he came to understand that Israel had a future, he believed in the future of Israel, but he did not accept what we know as the pretribulational rapture of the church. He rather accepted the post-tribulational rapture of the church but he believed very strongly in a soon return of our Lord. So that became his theology.

While he was out there he was asked if he would serve as the pastor of Ebenezer Chapel and in 1830 he began to pastoral work in Ebenezer Chapel in Teignmouth in Southern England. But he was studying the Scriptures and finally as a result of meditating -- when I say finally, this all happened very relatively soon. He was still a young man. But from the reading of Scriptures such as Acts chapter 20 and verse 7, "And upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread Paul preached unto

them ready to part unto morrow and continue to speak until midnight." Mr. Mueller came to believe that the Lord's Supper should be observed every Sunday and in Ebenezer Chapel they began to observe the Lord's Supper every Sunday feeling that that was the Scriptural way that the Lord's Supper should be observed.

Furthermore he began to study other things that had to do with Christian ministry and he came to the conviction that he should not take a salary from the church. And so I'm old enough, I can remember a number of churches of the United States that back in the 30s and 40s had no offering taken in their churches. For example, it's my understanding -- I noticed Kent Stainback I think, was here, but it's my understanding, for example that the Greenville Presbyterian Church for a long time operated with simply a box at the back, and other churches around you probably know because that was very popular in evangelical churches. And I can remember in Scofield Memorial Church when that was true their too. When they were downtown on Harwood they didn't take up an offering, they had boxes in the back. That's about forty-five years ago. But that was very common and so he felt that he should not take up a salary. And so they put boxes in the back and that's the way he and others were paid for their ministry.

He had some very very definite changes in his opinions. He said that he thought that there should be no more going to man instead of going to the Lord. And so he began to carry on his ministry in that, looking only to the Lord. And all they had was a little box in the back of the church. There's interesting illustrations that characterized Mr. Mueller's experience and I'd like to read a few of them tonight here and there because they're very interesting and illustrate the kind of training that Mueller received from the Lord as God was preparing him for the great work that God was going to do through him.

On page forty-five of this book called George Mueller, Delighted in God by Roger Steer, these are the words that Mr. Steer writes: "Mueller also decided that from that time on whence he would ask no one, not even his fellow Christians in Ebenezer Chapel, to help financially in any way. There would be no more 'going to man instead of going to

the Lord'. Mueller admitted that this decision required more grace than to give up my salary, but it was this decision probably more than anything else that makes the story of his life from this time so exciting. At this time also they decided to take," he and his wife, "Luke 12:33, 'Sell that ye have and give arms' literally and carry out the commandment. And during the rest of his life and the rest of her life, because she died long before him, they carried out that particular method of receiving help in ministry of the word. So he thought of the Lord as one who was well able to answer his prayers."

On another page shortly after this there's an interesting little account in which this is illustrated. "The money in the home had been reduced to ten shillings." A farm laborer earned about ten shillings a week but they had been reduced to about eight shillings. "And so that morning they'd asked God to give them some more money. They had a visit from a lady member of the church who lived in the village and during the conversation the hostess asked Mueller, "Do you have any money?" "I told the bretheren, dear sister, when I gave up my salary that I would for the future tell the Lord only about my wants." She replied, "But he has told me to give you some money. About a fortnight ago I asked him what I should do for him and he told me to give you some money. And last Saturday it came again powerfully to my mind and has not left me since. And I felt is so forcibly last night that I could not help speaking of it to Brother P". (The name is not given, it's Brother P.) Mueller rejoiced when he realized how God had answered their prayers.

But still thinking it better not to mention their circumstances he changed the subject to other matters, and when they left the lady gave him two guineas. The following week at Christmas when they were reduced to about nine shillings Mueller prayed again for money and within thirty hours they were given seven pounds, ten shillings from three different sources. Mueller commented on the first few weeks after their decision to ask God alone of the God, 'Admire the gentleness of the Lord that he did not try our faith much at the commencement but gave us first encouragement and allowed us to see his willingness to help us before he was pleased to try it more fully.' In the

chapel they put a box up at the back and it was intended originally that the box would be emptied once a week and the funds given to Mr. Mueller and his wife. But as was sometimes the case those things were forgotten. And consequently in some cases the box would be back there for three weeks, and even as much as five weeks, and in the meantime Mr. Mueller and his wife had no funds."

So there's one instance in the book in which the account is given, "On Saturday June 11th, 1831 Mueller and Henry Crake [phonetic] returned from Talke [phonetic] where they had been preaching. Crake recorded in his diary how powerfully Mueller had preached on the Friday. The Mueller had nine pets left and so Mueller prayed that the Lord would be pleased to impress it on Brother Y that we wanted money so that he might open the box. The next morning at breakfast the Mueller's had just enough butter for a friend and a relative who was staying with them. They made no mention of their circumstances, of course, so that their visitors should not feel uncomfortable. After the morning meeting Brother Y quite unexpectedly opened the box and gave Mueller the contents: one pound, eight shillings, ten and a half pence. That is the equivalent of rather more than two weeks wages. Poor Brother Y who had evidently learned his lesson the hard way told George that he and his wife had been unable to sleep the previous night for worry that Mueller's might be in need."

And Roger Steer says, "Mueller found it hard to conceal a smile." I think perhaps he was enjoying the fact that he had a sleepiness night because he hadn't been opening the box as he should. [Laughter]

Well, there was another man by the name of Crake who as out in the general area. Henry Crake. He was a Scot actually, and he and Mueller had a lot of fellowship together. And at Bethesda Chapel in Bristol the two began to work together. They were called there. Arthur T. Pierson who also wrote a book on George Mueller, one of the best, said that that church Bethesda Chapel in Bristol was one of the two truly apostolic churches that I know.

Well, as a result of the ministry in Bristol and the things that were happening Mr. Mueller began to have ideas about further ministry beside the preaching ministry. And so he, and Crake, and others became concerned about other ways to reach people. And Mueller particularly took the lead and in 1834 there was founded the Scriptural Knowledge Institute for home and abroad. And the purpose of the Scriptural Knowledge Institute was to have day schools, Sunday schools, and adult Bible schools, and then also to have Bibles to distribute and then to do mission work. And even, I think, ten years ago that institution was still in existence and hundred and fifty or two hundred thousand dollars is being given every year still to those things.

The results of that work were remarkable and most people do not realize that this was also part of Mr. Mueller's work. I think that this may give you some idea of some of the things that were being done. "During the previous months SKI," that's the institute, "had financed besides one hundred children in the homes a whole number of other important activities including: two Sunday schools, two adult schools; one for men and one for women, which on for evenings in the week nearly three hundred fifty people were taught reading and writing, their books and writing materials being supplied free of charge. The opportunity was, of course, taken to point out they way of salvation at some classes. Six day schools; three for boys, three for girls. Mueller's aim was that the poorest citizens of Bristol should be able to send their children school entirely free on payment of one-fifth or one-sixth of the expenses. They were also intended to enable Christian parents of modest means to send their children to school where the teachers were all believers. From March 1834 to May 1842 well over two and a half thousand children were taught at these schools. All these adult and children's schools were entirely financed by Mueller's institution."

So you can see that there were a lot of things that were going on besides what is known as the orphanage work. In addition Roger Steer says, "From its foundation in 1834 SKI had circulated nearly seven thousand Bibles. In the seventeen months ending May

1842 nearly one hundred and thirty pounds had been to missionaries in Jamaica, Australia, Canada and the East Indies. In the same period well over twenty two thousand short Christian books or pamphlets had been distributed, the greater part free of charge. So the work that was being carried on was not simply the work in the church but also throughout the city.

The Bristol Orphan Houses are the - are the houses and is the work by which Mueller was particularly known and known to our day. And I think it might be good to read some of the things that Mr. Steer points out about it. The motives for the work suggested, I think, by this particular paragraph he had decided to embark upon this adventure. And mind you now Mr. Mueller at this time is not an old man. I forgot the exact date of the orphanages but he was in his thirties. He decided to embark upon the adventure far more daring, far more exciting even then the construction by Brunell of his mighty bridge at Clifton. He put the challenge that faced him like this, "Now if I, a poor man, simply by prayer and faith obtained without asking any individual," and as Mueller wrote that he put that in italics, "without asking any individual the means for establishing and carrying on an orphan house there would be something which with the Lord's blessing might be instrumental in strengthening the faith of the children of God besides being a testimony to the consciences of the unconverted of the reality of the things of God."

And he went on to say with reference to this, "I certainly did from heart desire to be used by God to benefit the bodies of poor children bereaved of both parents, and seek in other respects with the help of God to do them good for this life. I also particularly long to be used by God in getting the dear orphans trained up in the fear of God, but still the first and primary object of the work was that God might be magnified by the fact that the orphans under my care are provided with all they need only by prayer and faith without anyone being asked by me or my fellow laborers whereby it may be seen that God is faithful still and hears prayers still."

About that time, it was 1835, he was thirty years of age. He was struck by the words of Psalm 81 verse 10, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." There are some very interesting little stories that are found in this book of the experiences of Mr. Mueller. One of them is recorded in this book on page seventy-one. This is in connection with one hundred pounds. When one hundred pounds, which was a tremendously large gift at the time, was given to Mr. Mueller. And when he discovered who it was that had given it he knew this woman was a woman who earned about three shillings, six pence a week. Think of that now. Three shillings, six pence a week. Now of course, today that wouldn't be worth a dollar. But in those days it was worth a little more. That's what she made for one week, but she gave one hundred pounds.

So when he discovered who had sent the hundred pounds he was reluctant to accept it. He knew she was a woman who earned about three six a week about needlework, and decided to visit her to find out whether the money had been given in a moment without thought of the cost. He discovered that the woman had been left four hundred and eighty pounds on the death of her father. On receipt of the money she had parted with a large sum to pay off some outstanding family debts and have given her mother a hundred pounds. She had then sent the one hundred toward the orphan house. Mueller spoke to her at great length hoping to persuade her to reconsider. He reply was brief, "The Lord Jesus has given his last drop of blood for me and should I not give all the money I have? Rather than the orphan house should not be established I will give all the money I have." He left the house not only with the hundred pounds but another five pounds for the poor members of Gideon and Bethesda. These were two churches which she insisted that he should take. Mueller commented, "During her lifetime I suppose not six bretheren and sisters among us knew that she had ever possessed four hundred and eighty pounds so that she had given one hundred toward the orphan house."

It's a remarkable story that just over and over again and all the time Mueller is keeping all of this to himself. No one knew anything about what was transpiring there

except from observing it from the outside. But he had a period of trial from 1838 to 1846. Some of the greatest trials occurred. Later on when the work became so well known and when Mueller became so well known they had an excess of money and people were happy to give them money, and they were sending money all over the world then. But in the early days that was something else. And to read the experiences is really a remarkable thing because over and over again they would face the next day with nothing. And then in miraculous ways, for they were miraculous from our standpoint, God would supply their needs.

One of these is rather interesting -- well, they're all interesting, but one of them interesting to me. This is within that period of time and they had just come about to the end of their monies. And we read from Steer's book, "That afternoon a lady and gentleman visited the homes in Wilson Street. At the boys house they met two ladies who were also on a visit, one of whom turned to the matron and said, 'Of course you cannot carry on these institutions without a good stock of funds.' And turning to the matron the gentleman then said, 'Have you a good stock?'" Oh, I see they had the principle was they were not to tell anybody about anything. "So the matron said, 'Our funds are deposited in a bank which cannot break.' Cleverly avoiding breaking the rule never to reveal the state of the funds. Tears came into the eyes of the inquiring lady. On leaving the gentleman left five pounds at the boy's home. But over and over again one after another of these instances are taken place that just really are astonishing.

"How would you do," people sometimes said to Mueller, "in case there were a mealtime to come and you had no provisions for the children? While they really wanted clothes and you had no money to procure them?" "Such a thing is impossible," Mueller would insure them. "As long as the Lord gives us grace to trust in him for whosever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. So that's an impossible thing you're suggesting." That would never happen. Now, I might say there are a number of illustrations in Mueller's experience in which that was true the night before. But even before breakfast

someone would arrive with loaves for other food for them to eat so that they never did have insufficiency on the table. They didn't have anything left, but it was constantly like that.

On another page here I marked out a couple of the passages that impressed me very much. He says, "But so long as we shall be enabled to trust in the living God and so long as though falling short in every way of what we might be and ought to be, we are least kept from living in sin. Such a state of things," that is when they would have insufficiency, "cannot occur." One of the nearest approaches to such a situation occurred in February of 1842. At midday on Tuesday the eight there was enough food in all the houses for that days meals, but not money to buy the usual stock of bread for future use or milk for the following morning. Two houses," by this time they had about five orphan houses and ultimately they had over two thousand orphans but I don't know that he tells us what the number was at this particular point. Probably within the hundred or so. But it goes onto say, "use your stock of bread for future use of milk for the following morning. Two houses needed coal." In Mueller's view they had never been in greater poverty. And he noted that, "If God sent nothing before nine next day his name would be dishonored," Mueller says.

"Late in the afternoon nine plum cakes arrive baked by order of a kindly sister. Encouraging and no doubt tasty as they were the situation was still grim. As Mueller retired to bed that night he finished that day's journal entry with the words -- incidentally he kept the finest kinds of records through all of this. His dramatic nature came out and all of the records are there that he wrote day after day after day. He says, "Finished the days journal entry with the words, 'truly we are poorer than ever but through grace my eyes look not at the empty stores and the empty purse, but to the riches of the Lord only.' The next morning Mueller walked early Wilson Street to discover how God would meet the need only to find on a ravel between seven and eight that it had all ready been met. A Christian businessman had walked about half a mile to his place of work when the

thought occurred to him that Mueller's children might be in need. He decided, however, not to retrace his steps then but to take something to the homes that evening, but as he latter told Mueller, 'I couldn't go any further and felt constrained to go back.' He delivered three sovereigns to the boy's home. This donation together with some other smaller sums met the needs for two days."

So this is going on day after day, year after year. That, I would think, would try your faith. [Laughter] Well, ultimately in 1861 there were two thousand children and they had moved to a new location, had built five big buildings, no mortgages on them. They were paid for and the two thousand children were being cared for by the ministry in Bristol. Mr. Mueller, after the conclusion of that period of time, engaged in a worldwide preaching ministry. His first wife died in around 1870 and he married again about a little less than two years later. And he began a worldwide preaching ministry because the orphanages had been built up in such a way and they were so widely known that they had very little problems with money. The only thing that really was a problem was expansion and obtaining new property, and places to build, and money to build new buildings. And so he began to engage in a worldwide preaching ministry.

And the rest of his life, about seventeen years, he traveled two hundred thousand miles over the face of the globe really. He preached and taught in thirty different countries in the seventeen years, and was in the United States. He taught and preached in many of the places in the United States. The highlight of the places that he preached I'm sure was that he preached in Charleston, South Carolina. That was the highlight of the whole time I imagine. But that was one of the ways in which God honored this great man of faith. He died in 1898 at age ninety-two. March 10 he had gone upstairs and was found the next morning laying upon the floor. He had sudden heart attack evidently. Although the book doesn't really say why I assume that was it.

And the Bethesda crowd where the Bethesda Church was had just this tremendous crowd. A hundred different carriages were in the funeral procession. The mayor's state

coach was one of them. Seven thousand people at the cemetery and the obituaries were just remarkable testimonies to the faith of this man and others who served with him. The assets of Mr. Mueller at the time of his death were, and this includes his furniture, one hundred and sixty pounds. In other words, perhaps by our money maybe fifteen hundred dollars or two thousand dollars. That's all that he had. He never believed in going out of his way to lay up any funds. And I want to say something about that in a moment. But this is remarkable testimony and I'd like to say a few things about Believers Chapel because that was the title of the subject for tonight "George Mueller, Believers Chapel".

The principles of Believers Chapel are not entirely the principles of George Mueller but very close to Mr. Mueller's principles. And I confess in my own life they have been very instrumental in my own thoughts about the way in which the Lord's work should be supported. When I was in Birmingham, Alabama in the insurance business I read Arthur T. Pierson's book George Mueller of Bristol. And Mr. Pierson was an outstanding Presbyterian minister and preaching, one of the great ones out of the latter part of the nineteenth century. Preached in Spurgeon's Tabernacle for a lengthy period of time and Spurgeon even wanted him to succeed him there because he was such a great preacher. But I read through George Mueller of Bristol, written by Mr. Pierson, and I came to understand something of the principles by which Mueller operated and by which it appeared to me that the Scriptures set forth that we should operate.

The principles that Mueller used were simply they would look to the Lord for their funds and they would not look to anyone else. They would not advertise their needs except to the Lord. And so just as these individuals were told never to divulge their need except to the Lord in prayer, they never divulged their needs. So he operated in that way. The finances of that great work were truly by faith. And individuals other than Mr. Mueller and those that he took into this council at the institutions themselves had idea of the need or even from whence came the money.

Robert Pryor called me today and he said Jews for Jesus have been after the elders to have a meeting in Believers Chapel, but there's a bit of a problem. The Jews for Jesus want to take up an offering in Believers Chapel and the elders of Believers Chapel would be happy to have the Jew for Jesus present their ministry but they would be unhappy and would not permit an offering to be taken in Believers Chapel. So they've been at locker heads and every year the Jews for Jesus call him, so he said, and every year he has to say no to them. So I can see from just what -- were it Mr. Mueller's principles he wouldn't have allowed them either to have a meeting and the orphanage because they would want to take up an offering, and he was opposed to that particular type of thing.

The principles of the Chapel have been that we would look to the Lord for our funds and that's why we do not among other things have offerings. At the back we don't have a box. And I would not necessarily be opposed to that kind of thing because in the evening when the believers are there we do take an offering, but when the unbelievers are here we don't pass the plates for them by way of conviction. The Chapel has stood also for gifted ministry, that is ministry by gifted individuals. Mueller himself held to that particular principle. He met with those that were known as the Christian bretheren. And at Bethesda and the other places where he preached that was what he practiced and he had come to the conviction from the study of the Bible that that was the way that ministry should be carried on, ministry by gifted individuals.

As far as meetings and the Lord's Supper is concerned Mr. Mueller had the same principles that we have here. There were ministry meetings and at the same time the Lord's Supper meeting, the Lord's Supper being observed every Sunday in the churches in which Mr. Mueller served. Oversight was by a body of elders. And oversight is not by an ordained man who has a special status, such as is characteristic of our churches today. But ministry is by gifted men and oversight by a body of elders.

There is Believers Chapel, just as in Bethesda and other of the chapels that Mr. Mueller was identified with later, there is the essentiality of the Scriptures in which the

headship of Jesus Christ was acknowledged. So in Believers Chapel these are the principles that we have sought to carry out. I think this has some special relevance for us as we think about an addition to our building because the elders are, as I understand them, very convinced that we should look simply to the Lord and there should be no appeals for funds. As are ordinarily made, we would look to the Lord. And consequently as I understand them, and they are free to correct to my understanding, as I understand them they will when it's necessary to consider the matter most seriously they will look to the Lord for the funds and will construct the building in that way so that no appeals are made to any individual or any body of people.

It's rather interesting that when the letter went out not long ago that some people have told the elders that they would like them to know right now that they're not going to give. They regarded that letter in which there was no appeal for funds as if it were an appeal for funds because of the background that so many people have in churches that practice that kind of methodology. But we intend to look to the Lord and if the Lord supplies the funds then the addition to the building will be built. If the Lord does not supply the funds it will not be built.

And incidentally, Mr. Mueller at one point did borrow some money. It was in connection with building a building. He had considerable -- what do you call it when you borrow money against? Hmm? Yeah. A collateral. He had sufficient collateral. He had land and it was far more than the loan. I've forgotten the amount of the loan. It was not real big. And for a short time he borrowed money from the bank and gave that property in as collateral. As far as I know that was the only time that ever happened. He said that he was in harmony with that. It was not something that he did that he felt bad about. So this is in essence the way he carried on his ministry. Incidentally, that ministry so far as I know is still going on today although the character of it has changed somewhat. But it's my understanding that they still do not appeal for funds. It's a very close connection with the China Inland Mission through the years. And in the earlier

years Mr. Mueller and the work in Bristol supported well over a hundred of the missionaries of the China Inland Mission as well.

Well, I'd like to for a few moments in closing with a couple of illustrations turn back to Psalm 23. Incidentally, a west country farmer once said of Mueller -- this is the west country of Britain, "The 23rd Psalm seemed written on his face." That was the way he put it. "As far as the Bible was concerned Mr. Mueller claimed to have read the Bible. Incidentally, he claimed to have read it (and I'm quoting him) considerably more than one hundred times. But not only did he read it but he said he read it with prayer and meditation. In other words, it was not like the Bible Memory Association trying to read it to win a prize. But he read it with prayer and meditation over one hundred times, "considerable more (as he put it) than one hundred times." Prayer was of course the other means by which his work succeeded humanly speaking.

There are people who have often given suggestions about why Mr. Mueller was so successful. They suggested that he was a foreigner and he still had a little bit of a German accent. And we all like to give to people who have a little bit of German accent. Don't we? [Laughter] Well, I see that you don't like that necessarily. [Laughter] Well, that was one of the reasons they said he got his money. He had accent. Another reason they suggested was the novelty of the way. That is, the idea of looking to the Lord to supply your needs. That was such a novel way that people gave because of the novelty. Well, I'll tell you one thing is when it comes to taking money out of your pocketbook and putting it in a plate the novelty wears off rather quickly if it's only novelty. [Laughter] You can be sure of that.

And the other suggestion was that he had a secret treasure. And after all he was from Germany, he was a university graduate, he came from a fairly well to do family, so he's got some secret treasure from which draws his funds and enables him to do the work. There are so many interesting illustrations in this it would take us all night to detail them. Incidentally, this is an excellent little book. It's been a long since I read Mr.

Pierson's book, but this one is George Mueller: Delighted in God by Roger Steer. And any Texan ought to be able to read that with pleasure -- Roger Steer.

And I found it very interesting and it's filled with illustrations, and it's a very good book. But I just have time to read maybe one or two little things that are stated in it. "The boiler of the central heating unit in 1857 was having some problems and so they had to do work because it was December. And so the weather was rather bad, the day it was fixed the workman were to come and all the necessary arrangements were made. The fire, of course, had to be let out while the repairs were going on. But now see after the day was fixed for the repairs a bleak north wind set in began to blow either on Thursday or Friday before the Wednesday afternoon when the fire was to be let out. Now came the first really cold weather, which we had in the beginning of that winter during the first days of December. What was to be done? The repairs couldn't be put off. I now ask the Lord," Mr. Mueller said, "for two things: that he would be pleased to change the north wind into the south wind and that he would give to the workman a mind to work for I remembered how much Nehemiah accomplished in fifty-two days while he was building the walls of Jerusalem, because the people had a mind to work.

Well, the memorable day came. The evening before bleak north wind blew still but on the Wednesday the south wind blew exactly as I'd prayed. The weather was so mild that no fire was needed. The brickwork was removed, the leak was found out very soon, the boilermakers began to repair in good earnest. About half past eight in the evening when I was going home I was informed at the large that the acting principle of the firm, once the boilermakers came, had arrived to see how the work was going on and whether he could in any way speed the matter. I went immediately therefore into the cellar to see him with the men to seek to expedite the business. And speaking to the principle of this he said in their hearing, 'The men will work late this evening and very early again tomorrow.' 'We would rather sir,' said the leader, 'work all night.' Then I remembered the second part of my prayer that God would give the men a mind to work.

[Laughter] Thus, it was. By the morning the repair was accomplished. The leak was stopped, though with great difficulty, and within about thirty hours the brickwork was up again and the fire, and the boiler. And all the time the south wind blew so mildly that there was not the least need of a fire." [Laughter]

This book is full of interesting stories and they are only some of the stories. But one of them -- I just have to mention this one two. [Laughter] I think I've used this in a message some time back but Mr. Steer does give it here. "Mr. Mueller in 1877 was coming to the United States and he had an engagement. And off Newfoundland the weather turned cold and the ship's progress was seriously retarded by fog. The captain had been on the bridge for twenty-four hours and something happened which was to revolutionize his life. George Mueller appeared on the bridge, 'Captain, I've come to tell you I must be Quebec by Saturday afternoon.' 'It's impossible,' said the captain. 'Very well,' said Mueller, 'if your ship cannot take me God will find some other way. I've never broken an engagement for fifty years. Let's go down into the chart room and pray.' The captain wondered what lunatic asylum Mueller had come from. [Laughter] 'Mr. Mueller', he said, 'do you know how dense this fog is?' 'No, my eye is not on the density of the fog but on the living God who controls every circumstance of my life.' Mueller then knelt down and prayed simply. When he had finished the captain was about to pray but Mueller put his hand on his shoulder and told him not to. 'First, you don't believe he will answer. And second, I believe he has and there's no need whatever for you to pray about it.'

[Laughter] The captain looked at Mueller in amazement. 'Captain,' he continued, 'I have known my Lord for fifty years and there's never been a single day that I've failed to get an audience with the king. Get up captain and open the door and you'll find the fog is gone.'" Well, that's what it was. He got up the fog had lifted. The captain himself who later told the story of this incident, who was subsequently described by well known evangelists as one of the most devoted men I ever knew. [Laughter] I think I can understand why.

Well, I could talk of course on and on about this. But there's one little thing I think that challenged me a little bit. I like to think I have a little bit of money in the back in case something happens. You know? [Laughter] I'm sorry I read this because it's going to make it more difficult. [Laughter] But this has to do with, if I can find this particular one, it has to do with reserve funds. But unfortunately I have -- oh yes, here it is. I had forgot to put the page down but turned to it.

"A man was talking to me and he says, 'I suppose you've never contemplated a reserve fund.' Mueller answered with much emphasis, 'That would be the greatest folly. How could I pray if I had reserves?' [Laughter] God would say, 'Bring them out. Bring out those reserves, George Mueller.' 'Well, no I've never thought of such a thing. Our reserve fund is in heaven. God, the living God, is our sufficiency. I've trusted in him for one sovereign, I've trusted him for thousands, and I've never trusted in vein. Blessed is the man that trustesth in him.' 'Then, of course, you've never thought of saving for yourself.' I shall not soon forget," Parson's wrote, "the dignified manner with which I was answered by this mighty man of faith. Hitherto too he had been sitting opposite me with his knees almost close to mine with clasped hands and eyes that betokened to calm a quiet and meditative spirit. Most of the time he leaned forward, his gazed directed to the floor. But now he sat erect and looked for several moments into my face with an earnestness that seemed to penetrate through my very soul. There was a grand and majesty about those undimmed eyes so accustomed to spiritual visions and to looking into the deep things of God. I do not know whether the question seemed to him a sorted one or whether it touched, shall I say, a lingering remnant of the old self to which he so often eludes all his discourses. Anyhow, there was no shadow of doubt that it aroused his whole being. After a brief pause during which his face was summoned and the debts of his clear eyes flashed fire, he unbuttoned his coat, drew from his pocket an old-fashioned purse with rings in the middle separating the character of the coins, he placed it in my hands saying, 'All I am possessed of is in that purse. Every penny. Save for myself?

Never. When money is sent me for my own use I pass it on to God. As much as one thousand pounds has been thus sent at one time. I do not regard these gifts as belonging to me. They belong to him who is I am and whom I serve. Save for myself? I dare not save. It would be dishonoring to my loving gracious father."

Parsons handed the purse back to Mueller who told him the sum it contained. Parson's asked him if he spent much time on his knees. "More or less everyday, but I live in a spirit of prayer. I pray as I walk about, when I lay down, when I raise up, and the answers are always coming. Thousands and tens of thousands of times have prayers been answered. When once I am persuaded that the thing is right for the glory of God I go on praying for it until the answer comes. George Mueller never gives up."

That's interesting. Isn't it? George Mueller never gives up. I like this and I close with this little incident. In the orphan house there was a family that was there and they had a little daughter. And she wanted some things and she was talking to Mr. Mueller about them. And he told her how to pray for them and so on, and she would get the things that she thought she was going to get. But on one occasion her mother had tactfully suggested to her daughter that it might be better if she ended her prayers for Jesus' sake instead of like you do George Mueller's,' as she had been in the habit of doing. [Laughter] So what I nice way to pray. "Lord, answer my prayers like you did George Mueller's." [Laughter] So she learned to ask in Jesus' name.

Well, it's quite a testimony to

[RECORDING ENDED ABRUPTLY]