

I was born at Kroppenstaedt, near Halberstadt, in the kingdom of Prussia, on September 27th, 1805. In January 1810 my parents removed to Heimersleben, about four miles from Kroppenstaedt, where my father was appointed collector in the excise. As a warning to parents I mention, that my father preferred me to my brother, which was very injurious to both of us. To me, as tending to produce in my mind a feeling of self-elevation; and to my brother, by creating in him a dislike both towards my father and me.

My father, who educated his children on worldly views, and in the manner of our age; not in order that we might spend it, but, as he said, to accustom us to possess money without spending it. The result was, that it led me and my brother into many sins. For I repeatedly spent a part of the money in a childish way, and afterwards, when my father looked over my little treasure, I sought to deceive him in making up the account, either by not putting in all the money which he had given me, or by leaving to have more money than I really had. My father was very angry, and I was frequently punished, yet I remained the same. For before I was ten years old I repeatedly took of the government money which was intrusted to my father, and which he had to make up; till one day, as he had repeatedly missed money, he detected my theft, by depositing a counted sum in the room where I was, and leaving me to myself for a while. Being thus left alone, I took some of the money, and hid it under my foot in my bed. When my father returned, he entered the room, and missed the money. I was searched, and my theft detected.

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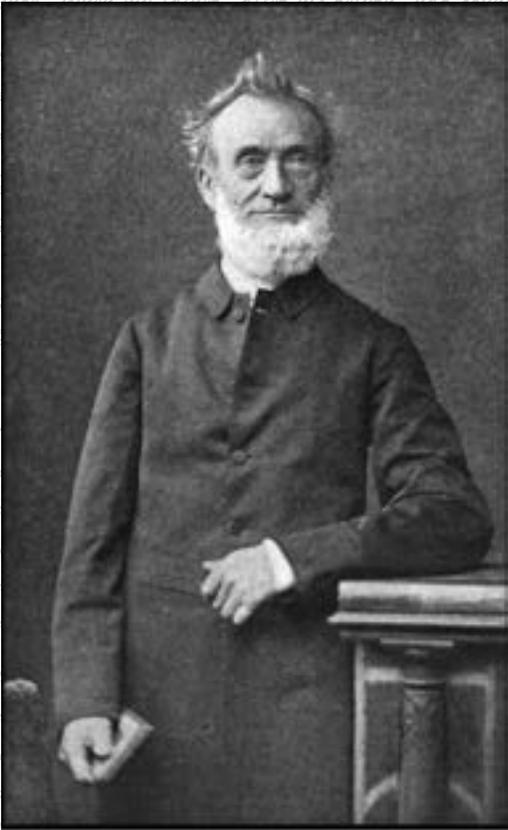
piano-forte and guitar, reading novels, frequenting taverns, forming resolutions to become different, yet breaking them almost as fast as they were made. My money was often spent on my sinful pleasures, through which I was now and then brought into trouble, so that once, to satisfy my hunger, I stole a piece of coarse bread, the allowance of a soldier who was quartered in the house where I lodged. What a bitter, bitter.

At Midsum. My father, being a Baptist, sent me to the cathedral classical school of Magdeburg; for I thought, that, if I could but leave my companions in sin, and get out of certain snares, and be placed under other tutors, I should then live a different life. But as my dependance in this matter also was not upon God, I fell into a still worse state. My father consented, and I was allowed to leave Halberstadt, and to stay at Heimersleben till Michaelmas. During the time of my residence at Heimersleben, I was to be made in his house there, for the sake of letting it profitably. Being thus quite my own master, I grew still more idle, and lived as much as before in all sorts of sin.

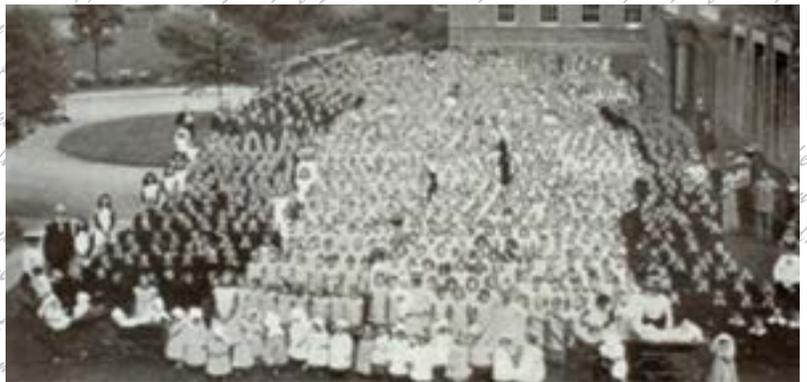
When Michaelmas came, I persuaded my father to leave me at Heimersleben till Easter, and to let me read the classics with a clergy

A STUDY GUIDE TO

GEORGE MÜLLER OF BRISTOL BY A. T. PIERSON



George Müller



Supplemented with excerpts from Müller's own writings

With particular emphasis on the spiritual disciplines

Prepared for the saints of West Suffolk Baptist Church

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FROM HIS BIRTH TO HIS NEW BIRTH

“The time was now come when God would have mercy upon me. His love had been set upon such a wretch as I was before the world was made. His love had sent his Son to bear the punishment due to me on account of my sins, and to fulfil the law which I had broken times without number. And now, at a time when I was as careless about him as ever, he sent his Spirit into my heart. I had no Bible, and had not read in it for years. I went to church but seldom; but, from custom, I took the Lord’s supper twice a year. I had never heard the gospel preached, up to the beginning of November 1825. I had never met with a person who told me that he meant, by the help of God, to live according to the Holy Scriptures. In short, I had not the least idea, that there were any persons really different from myself, except in degree...

But whilst I was thus outwardly gaining the esteem of my fellow-creatures, I did not care in the least about God, but lived secretly in much sin, in consequence of which I was taken ill, and for thirteen weeks confined to my room. During my illness I had no real sorrow of heart, yet being under certain natural impressions of religion, I read through Klopstock’s works without weariness. I cared nothing about the word of God. I had about three hundred books of my own, but no Bible. I practically set a far higher value upon the writings of Horace and Cicero, Voltaire and Moliere, than upon the volume of inspiration. Now and then I felt that I ought to become a different person, and I tried to amend my conduct, particularly when I went to the Lord’s supper, as I used to do twice every year, with the other young men. The day previous to attending that ordinance, I used to refrain from certain things; and on the day itself I was serious, and also swore once or twice to God, with the emblem of the broken body in my mouth, to become better, thinking that for the oath’s sake I should be induced to reform. But after one or two days were over, all was forgotten, and I was as bad as before.”

—Müller, George. *A Narrative of Some of the Lord’s Dealings with George Müller*. Vol. 1. London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1860. Print.

A. T. Pierson notes that, “A HUMAN life, filled with the presence and power of God, is one of God’s choicest gifts to His church and to the world,” but none of us come from the womb filled with this power and presence. For some, this is more evident than others, nevertheless it is true for all.

Many know the name of George Müller because of his faith, prayer, generosity, love, and his work ministering to orphans. However, few, if any, that knew him in his early life would have thought he would be famous for such *godly* qualities. Rather, they may have expected him to be infamous for his *ungodliness*.

Despite Müller’s profligacy, the Lord delivered him and used him mightily not only to deliver the needy from hunger and homelessness but to lead them to the throne of God by which they would be delivered from their greatest burden.

Pierson divides up Müller’s life into five major epochs or major periods:

1. From his birth to his new birth or conversion: 1805–1825.
2. From his conversion to full entrance on his life-work: 1825–35.
3. From this point to the period of his mission tours: 1835–75.
4. From the beginning to the close of these tours: 1875–92.
5. From the close of his tours to his death: 1892–98.

Take a few moments to outline the various epochs of your life thus far. You may have more or less than five (no two lives are the same!), so feel free to divide up the years of your sojourning as seems best. Often such epochs will be marked by “life-changing” events such as marriage, graduation, the death of a loved one, etc.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

The first epoch in Müller’s life that Pierson addresses is “*From his birth to his new birth or conversion.*” This epoch gets merely one chapter in this biography. Pierson comments that he has been so brief because “*it covers only the wasted years of a sinful and profligate youth and early manhood.*” To read Müller’s account of his pre-conversion life clearly illustrates that in many ways it was a wasted time.

However, Pierson goes on to state that even though these are “*wasted years*” they are “*of interest mainly as illustrating the sovereignty of that Grace which abounds even to the chief of sinners.*” It is vitally important, as believers, that we remember the manner of life that we have been delivered from. For ourselves, such recollection, while bringing sadness over the sinful lifestyle that we pursued, ought also to bring great encouragement as we see how the Lord has changed not only our outward actions but also our inward desires. If you choose to share your life story with others, whether verbally or in writing, it can often be an encouragement to them as well. For younger believers or those wrestling with indwelling sin it can be a reminder that you are a person of “*like passions*” and that you have not always been who you are now in Christ. By the grace of God, they may be trans-

Pierson identifies this unregenerate period in Müller’s life as “*wasted time*,” but even here the sovereign hand of God can be discerned. Müller’s education provided him with a rigorous mind that would serve him later in his work as a servant in Christ’s vineyard. The fiscal irresponsibility of his youth undoubtedly taught him valuable lessons about the value of stewardship. His lack of interaction with the gospel, despite attending a divinity school and pursuing a career in the church, surely impressed upon him in later years the need to make the gospel explicit.

How did God work in your life before your new birth to prepare you for the life that He has called you to?

The spiritual disciplines are virtually non-existent during this phase of Müller’s life. He didn’t even own a Bible! In his book *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life*, Don Whitney places Bible Intake first on the list of disciplines. In fact, he devotes two chapters to this one discipline! He does this because of the necessity of God’s Word for spiritual life and growth. As Paul says in Romans 10:17, “*faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*”

Take a few minutes to describe your relationship and interaction with the Bible during this period of your life. What was your attitude toward the Holy Scriptures?

“Besides the Holy Scriptures, which should be always THE book, THE CHIEF book to us, not merely in theory, but also in practice, such like books seem to me the most useful for the growth of the inner man. Yet one has to be cautious in the choice, and to guard against reading too much.”

—George Müller

