



LIFE GROUP CURRICULUM

**WHATEVER IT TAKES**  
*for the gospel*

COTTONWOOD CREEK CHURCH

## **Lesson 6: Whatever It Takes To Pray**

**Main Passage: Acts 12:1–19**

**Focus Verse: Acts 12:5**

*So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.*

**Big Idea: We should pray big prayers for God's will to be done.**

Prayer is a spiritual discipline. One that takes practice, patience and diligence. While there is no doubt that we need to pray personally, we also need to pray together. We need to be the kind of people who gather and pray for the Lord to do big things in and through us. When we pray together, we express the fullness of our worship and trust in God's leading and direction.

### **How Should We Pray?**

#### **Pray With PURPOSE**

**Acts 12:3**, *When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. <sup>4</sup> After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.*

In Acts 5 Peter was thrown in jail and he was rescued miraculously by an angel. There was no account of the people praying but God still acted. Once again, Acts 12 recounts a story where Peter was thrown in jail for preaching the name of Jesus. But the difference between the two accounts is the church is said to be praying for Peter in Acts 12. Why would the church stop everything and pray when God worked previously without their prayers?

Jerry Bridges says, "Prayer is the expression of our trust in the sovereignty of God." Prayer is admitting that only God can do what God can do. Our prayers have a purpose: They are an act of worship! They express trust and faith in God. They humble us. They remind us of who God is. And they soften our hearts. Our prayers praise God.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- How often do you pray?
- What are some of the main reasons you pray?

#### **Pray With BOLDNESS**

**Acts 12:5**, *So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.*

The early church prayed earnestly, fervently, and boldly. If prayer is an expression of our trust in God's sovereignty, then in prayer we trust the Almighty is listening to us! When we understand who we are praying to, we are able to pray big bold prayers to God. Our understanding of God drives both our purpose and our boldness in prayer.

When the Church prays boldly, we begin to impact our community as we become a beacon of hope and light to the world. We are good at praying safe prayers. But what if we as the Church started praying big bold prayers, that God would use us in a way so that He alone can receive the honor and glory? With a heart of worship, let's pray boldly that God would be made known in and through us.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire? Is prayer your first response or a last resort?
- Do you pray bold prayers? If not, why?
- When have you been frustrated in prayer, and when have you seen God move in a powerful to answer prayer?

### **Pray With DILIGENCE**

**Acts 12:6**, *The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. <sup>7</sup> Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. <sup>8</sup> Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. <sup>9</sup> Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. <sup>10</sup> They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. <sup>11</sup> Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent His angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen." <sup>12</sup> When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying.*

In this passage we read a miracle takes place, and what was the Church doing? They were still praying! It's easy to pray for something once or occasionally. But the beauty of ongoing community is that we would be praying diligently and persistently for a variety of things. Many times when we pray big bold prayers, it takes time and years of faithful praying and walking in obedience. But this is the case all over Scripture. Look at: Abraham, Joseph, Joshua, Ruth, David and Esther just to name a few. They all believed God but continued to diligently wait and pray to the Lord.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- What lessons can we learn about the power of ongoing prayer?
- Have you ever stopped praying for something because you grew weary or didn't feel like God was listening? How can you continue in prayer?
- But why is prayer such a powerful weapon?
- How does God use prayer to bring the kingdom to the one praying?



## **Pray With HUMILITY**

**Acts 12:13**, Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. <sup>14</sup> When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!" <sup>15</sup> "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel." <sup>16</sup> But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

This passage is both ironic and challenging. It is ironic because it almost reads like they don't believe God did the very thing that they had been praying for. It is challenging because God answered their prayer in a way that only God could have answered. It is humbling when God answers our prayers with a yes. Not because God submitted to our authority but because God heard our heart and He acted.

God always answers our prayers and in the case above, it was "Yes! I will act!" But he also answers in two other ways: "No" and "Wait." What do we do when God's answer isn't what we had prayed for?

**Acts 12:1**, It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. <sup>2</sup> He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. <sup>3</sup> When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

The Church had been praying for all of the apostles, and while we read the story of Peter and God clearly delivered him, what about James? Did God not care or listen to their prayers for him? Not at all! Again, prayer is our expression of our trust in God's sovereignty and our act of worship. We pray boldly and diligently, but we also pray humbly knowing that God knows what is best. And this is hard. We may ask: Why would God not protect James? Or maybe you think of this in the context of someone being sick, or other situations. Praying with humility is admitting that your perspective is limited. It's also admitting that God's plans are never thwarted. Though sometimes prayers aren't answered the way we want them to be, God is still sovereign and we will continue expressing our trust in Him.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- Have you ever been surprised when God answered a prayer? Please explain and share what you learned through that situation.
- How have you responded when God answered your prayer differently than you had hoped?

## **Pray With THANKSGIVING**

**Acts 12:17**, Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this," he said, and then he left for another place. <sup>18</sup> In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter.

Peter was released and he immediately told everyone to tell everyone. When God answers your prayer, be thankful and tell others about God's work. We shouldn't keep it to ourselves. God will make Himself known through His sovereign working. But we need to respond with outward thanksgiving as God works in our lives.

Thanksgiving is one of the most important aspects of worship. Thanksgiving is remembering Who God is, how He works, and giving credit where credit is due. We can't let our prayers stop with the request. Let thanksgiving become the fuel for whatever is coming, so we can continue to do whatever it takes for the Gospel.

**Discussion Questions:**

- After God answers a prayer, do you take the time to thank Him?
- How does hearing the testimonies of answered prayer requests encourage your walk with the Lord?
- What does a "Whatever It Takes" attitude look like in your prayer life?

## **Lesson 6 Additional Commentary (Acts 12:1–25)**<sup>6</sup>

### **Persecution Again in Jerusalem (12:1–25)**

After the glimpse at the Antioch church, attention focused once more on Jerusalem in chap. 12. If the apostles had remained largely untouched by the persecution that followed Stephen's death, the situation radically changed when Herod Agrippa assumed rule over Judea. The apostles then became the specific target of the king's efforts to suppress the Christians. James was beheaded, and Peter was put in prison in anticipation of the same fate. But not even the king was able to stem the tide when God was behind it. Indeed, the king found himself fighting against God and suffered the consequences (cf. 5:39; 11:17).

The whole story is told in one of the most delightful and engaging narratives in all of Acts. The villainy of Herod is established in vv. 1–5 with his execution of James and arrest of Peter. His designs were thwarted in the latter instance, however, when God delivered Peter in a miraculous manner (vv. 6–19). Peter's escape is told in two scenes, both related with consummate artistry. The first scene pictures the angel delivering Peter from jail (vv. 6–11). It has a vivid, almost comic touch; the angel had to prompt the groggy Peter every step of the way. One can almost hear Peter telling the story: "I tell you, I was completely out of it. It was all God's doing. I thought I was having a particularly pleasant dream." The second scene is no less entertaining, as Peter hastened to the house of John Mark's mother (vv. 12–19a). There is again a comic touch (with Rhoda leaving him knocking at the gate) and also a decidedly dramatic effect. Would he get inside before Herod's men discovered his escape and came after him? The story was still not over. There was a final deliverance of the apostles, as God dealt with their persecutor, Herod, in a definitive manner (vv. 19b–23). Once more at peace, the witness of the church prospered (vv. 24–25). The whole story of the deliverance of the apostles from Herod's clutches is bracketed by references to Paul and Barnabas's delivery of the Antioch relief offering (11:30; 12:25). It is the last narrative in Acts that deals exclusively with the apostles and the Jerusalem church. From this point on, whenever Jerusalem was involved, it would be in connection with Paul's ministry. Peter and his fellow apostles faded into the background, and Paul took center stage.

#### ***(1) Herod Agrippa's Persecution of the Apostles (12:1–5)***

**12:1** The story begins with a vague time reference. It was "about this time." Evidently Luke meant about the time the Antioch church was preparing its relief offering for the Jerusalem church (11:27–30). Considering the history of Herod Agrippa I, the Herod of this story, the time most likely would have been the spring of A.D. 42 or 43. The Greek of v. 1 is quite vivid: Herod "laid violent hands" on some of the Christians. To understand why he would do this, it is necessary to understand something of Herod Agrippa I and his relationship to the Jews. Agrippa was the grandson of Herod the Great. His father, Aristobulus, had been executed in 7 B.C. by his grandfather for fear that he might usurp his throne. After his father's death, while still a child, Agrippa was sent to Rome with his mother, where he was reared and educated along with the children of the Roman aristocracy. These childhood friendships eventually led to his ruling over a Jewish kingdom nearly the extent of that of his grandfather. In A.D. 37 the emperor Caligula gave

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<sup>6</sup> John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 276–286.

him the title of king and made him ruler over the territories formerly ruled by his uncle Philip, lands in the Transjordan and the Ten Cities (Decapolis) north of Galilee. In A.D. 39 Caligula extended Agrippa's rule by giving him Galilee and Perea, the territory of his uncle Antipas, who had been sent into exile. Finally, when his former schoolmate Claudius became emperor in A.D. 41, he was given rule of Judea and Samaria, which had been under Roman procurators for thirty-five years. He was truly "king of the Jews" now, ruling over all of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, the Transjordan, and the Decapolis.

Though king, Agrippa was hardly secure. Much of his good fortune was due to his friendship with Caligula, and Caligula had not been a popular emperor with the Romans. In fact, Agrippa could not count on always being in the good graces of Rome. It became all the more important for him to win the loyalty of his Jewish subjects in order to give him at least a firm footing at home. Everything Josephus said about Agrippa would indicate that he made every attempt to please the Jews, particularly currying the favor of the influential Pharisees. His "Jewishness," however, seems to have been largely a face he put on when at home. When away, he lived in a thoroughly Roman fashion. Why persecution of the Christians was particularly pleasing to them at this time is not stated. Perhaps the acceptance of uncircumcised Gentiles as related in chap. 11 had something to do with their disfavor.

**12:2** Agrippa began his persecution of the Christians by having James killed "with a sword." This James is described as "brother of John" and thus was the apostle, the son of Zebedee. Some interpreters have suggested that his brother John was also executed at this time, interpreting Mark 10:39 as a prediction that both would be martyred. John 21:23, however, seems to predict the opposite; and early church tradition has John living to an old age and dying a natural death. If Herod executed James in the Roman fashion "with the sword," he was beheaded. If he used the Jewish mode of execution, which forbade beheading as a desecration to the body, he had "the edge of the sword" thrust through his body. The martyrdom of James is told with the utmost brevity. Luke did not want to dwell on it but used the incident to set the stage for his main emphasis—God's deliverance of Peter.

**12:3–5** Having won points with the Jews by the execution of James, Agrippa then moved against the chief of the apostles, Peter, arresting him and placing him in prison. Luke noted that it was the Feast of the Unleavened Bread. Herod would not risk his favor with the Jews by executing Peter during this time, since that would be considered a desecration. The Passover was eaten on the eve of Nisan 14 and was followed by seven days of eating unleavened bread, ending on Nisan 21. Luke used the term "Passover" for the entire period. It would have been after the holy days had ended that Agrippa would have brought Peter forth for public trial and surely also for execution (v. 4). Peter was placed under heavy security, being guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. This was the usual Roman practice, changing guards every three hours throughout the twelve night hours to assure maximum alertness. Why the heavy guard? Perhaps the Sanhedrin had informed Agrippa of their own experience in jailing the apostles on a previous occasion (5:19). While Peter waited in prison, the Christians used their most effective means of assistance. They prayed continually for him (v. 5).

## ***(2) Peter's Miraculous Deliverance from Prison (12:6–19a)***

**12:6–8a** The story of Peter's deliverance begins with the notice that it was the night before Peter's trial. This heightens its dramatic impact. It was the last minute before the sealing of the

apostle's doom. Peter is described as sleeping, bound with two chains, each fastened to a guard, one on his right and one on his left. The other two guards of the squadron of four stood watch at the doors of the prison. Perhaps one stood at each of the two inner gates of the prison (cf. v. 10). That Peter could sleep so soundly the night before his trial is perhaps indicative of his calm assurance that he was in God's hands. It may also reflect that the guards were asleep on either side of him. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared, and a flash of heavenly light filled the cell. Peter was still fast asleep, and the angel had to arouse him, perhaps with a kick in the ribs. Still not fully alert, Peter really had no idea what was happening. The angel had to direct every single movement of the apostle: "get up"; "put your coat on"; "tie your sandals"; "follow me." Obviously, this was not Peter's *escape*. It was rather his *deliverance*. Peter was totally passive throughout the entire incident.

**12:8b–11** Peter dutifully followed the angel's direction. Still half-asleep, he imagined that he was having some sort of vision (v. 9). With a pronounced dramatic tone, each step of their progress was noted. They safely passed the first sentry guarding the inner gate to the cell. Perhaps a "deep sleep from the Lord" had fallen upon the guards (cf. 1 Sam 26:12). Suspense mounted: Would they make it past the rest of the guard? They passed the second gate safely and then came to the outer gate that led into the city, a forbidding iron barrier.

Most likely the place of Peter's confinement was the Tower of Antonia, where the Roman troops were barracked. Located at the northeastern corner of the temple complex, its eastern entrance led into the streets of the city. Even this formidable iron barrier proved no hindrance to Peter and the angel, opening of its own accord and allowing their safe passage. The angel led Peter down the length of the first street from the prison. Perhaps coming to a corner and allowing Peter to turn into a side street and out of sight of the prison and having delivered the apostle to safety, the angel disappeared. Only then did Peter come to full alertness and realize that God had indeed delivered him from Herod's clutches and his anticipated death (v. 11).

**12:12** The scene shifts to the Christian community who had been praying fervently for Peter (vv. 12–17). One group had gathered at the home of John Mark's mother, and Peter headed there. It is unusual that Mary was identified through Mark; usually the child was identified by the parent. The reason possibly is that Mark was the better known of the two in Christian circles, or it may be that there were several prominent women named Mary in the early church. They were perhaps distinguished by their children. John Mark would soon play a significant role in the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas (12:25; 13:5, 13; 15:37, 39).

**12:13–14** The scene at Mary's house is played out in a delightful fashion with the servant-girl Rhoda as the main character. Rhoda was a common Greek name, often borne by servants and meaning *rose*. When Peter arrived, he stood at the outer gate that entered into the courtyard. Rhoda probably was responsible for keeping the gate, a task often delegated to female servants (cf. John 18:16f.). Responding to Peter's knocking, she hurried out to the gate and discovered who was there. For all her joy, she ran back into the house to announce the good news, forgetting altogether that Peter would really like to have come in. This heightened the suspense all the more. Peter did not need to be standing outside in the street, exposed to possible recapture. "Peter is at the door!" Rhoda announced excitedly, interrupting the prayers of the Christians who had gathered there. "No, it can't be," they replied; "it must be his angel."



**12:15–16** This response reflects the Jewish belief that each person has a guardian angel as his or her spiritual counterpart. It was believed that one’s angel often appeared immediately after the person’s death, and that idea may lurk behind the response to Rhoda. “You’ve seen his ghost,” we would say. Such a reply is remarkable coming from a group that had been totally occupied in prayer for Peter’s deliverance. They found it easier to believe that Peter had died and gone to heaven than that their prayers had been answered. In any event, who could trust a hysterical servant girl? “You’re crazy,” they said. Some things are just too good to be true (cf. Luke 24:11). But it was true, and Peter’s persistent knocking finally got a response (v. 16).

**12:17** Verse 17 is a key verse. Basically, it gives three pieces of information: (1) Peter’s report of his miraculous delivery, (2) his instruction to tell the news to James, and (3) his departure to “another place” where he would find refuge from the wrath of Agrippa. The first item is exactly what one would expect under the circumstances. That Peter had to motion them to silence in order to share his story is indicative of the excited hubbub created by his totally unexpected presence. The second item, though seemingly incidental, is actually a keynote for the subsequent text of Acts. The James who was to be informed of Peter’s deliverance was James the oldest of Jesus’ brothers, who from this point on assumed the leadership of the church in Jerusalem (cf. 15:13–21; 21:18). It is interesting that “the brothers” are to be informed along with James. Perhaps this refers to the elders, who were assuming an increasing role in the governance of the Jerusalem church (cf. 11:30). The other apostles are not mentioned. At this time they may have been absent from Jerusalem, having taken refuge from Agrippa’s persecution. The third piece of information in v. 17 has perhaps provoked more scholarly attention than it deserves, largely due to the tradition that the “other place” to which Peter went was Rome. Luke evidently did not consider the place all that important and did not specify where it was. The point is simply that he had to go elsewhere to find safety from Agrippa. Later, after Herod’s death, he was back in Jerusalem (15:7). That Peter went to Rome at this early date is most unlikely, and Paul’s Epistle to the Romans seems to speak against it (15:20).

**12:18–19a** The final scene in the story of Peter’s escape returns to the prison (vv. 18–19a). When the guards awoke in the morning, they found no one attached to their chains and likely no evidence of an escape other than the obvious fact that Peter was not there. After interrogating the guards and failing to locate Peter, Agrippa had the guards executed. This was in accordance with Roman law, which specified that a guard who allowed the escape of a prisoner was to bear the same penalty the escapee would have suffered. Agrippa had every intention of subjecting Peter to the same fate as James.

### ***(3) Herod’s Self-Destructive Arrogance (12:19b–23)***

**12:19b–20** There are two climaxes to the account of Agrippa’s persecution. One is Peter’s escape from his clutches. The other is Agrippa’s own grisly fate. Chronologically, his death came anywhere from several months to a year after Peter’s escape, but the Christians viewed it very much as a divine retribution for what they had suffered under the king. Josephus also gave an account of Agrippa’s death (*Ant.* 19.343–52) which, though going into greater detail, is very much in agreement with the narrative in Acts. Josephus and Acts both set the event in Caesarea (Acts 12:19b). Josephus did not mention the quarrel with the Phoenician coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon. Evidently it was some sort of economic war in which Agrippa had the upper hand, since these coastal towns were indeed totally dependent for their food on the inland territories Agrippa ruled

(v. 20).<sup>16</sup> We know nothing more of Blastus. He is described as being the king's "chamberlain," or "personal servant." As a trusted servant, he was evidently able to gain the king's ear on the matter and negotiate for a settlement suitable to the Tyrians and Sidonians. Blastus was likely given some "financial consideration" by them in exchange for his role as mediator.

**12:21–23** Verse 21 describes Agrippa as appearing before the people "on the appointed day." Josephus specified that it was the day of a festival in honor of Caesar. Evidently the king chose this as the occasion for formally concluding the agreement with Tyre and Sidon. Josephus also went into greater detail on the "royal robes" worn by Agrippa. The garment was made of silver and glistened radiantly in the morning sun. As Herod, in all his glory, turned and addressed the people, they shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man" (v. 22). Josephus recorded a like response from the people, who hailed Herod as a god and "more than mortal." Josephus at this point added significant detail, noting that Herod neither affirmed nor denied the people's ascription of divinity to him. Then, looking up, he saw an owl. On an earlier occasion, when imprisoned in Rome, he had seen a vision of an owl; and a fellow prisoner told him it was the harbinger of good fortune for him. That had indeed proved true, for he was released and eventually became king of the Jews. The same prisoner, however, had warned him that if he ever again saw an owl, he would have but five days to live (*Ant.* 18.200). Josephus added that he was immediately stricken with pain and carried to his bed chamber, and he died exactly five days later. Luke's account also speaks of an immediate death, making explicit what is implicit in Josephus—he was struck down by "an angel of the Lord."

Once again we see a motif already familiar in Acts. There is both mercy and judgment with the Lord. The Spirit blessed the faithful Christians with miraculous works and great growth (5:12–16). The same Spirit brought judgment to Ananias and Sapphira (5:1–11). The Lord's angel delivered Peter from mortal danger (12:6–17). The Lord's angel struck Agrippa dead for all his arrogance (12:20–23). He did not "give praise to God"—neither in his acceptance of the people's blasphemous acclamation nor in his persecution of God's people. Josephus spoke of acute pain in Agrippa's abdomen. Luke said that he was "eaten by worms."

#### ***(4) Peace for the Church (12:24–25)***

**12:24** With Agrippa's sudden removal, the persecution of the church ended, and once more the word of God flourished. The Greek says literally that it "grew and multiplied," just as the seed that fell on good ground in Jesus' parable of the sower. This is the last summary of the Jerusalem church in Acts. It ends on a positive note. God continued to bless the witness of the Jerusalem community.

**12:25** Verse 25 moves the narrative forward, mentioning the return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch on completion of their mission of delivering the famine relief offering (11:30). Viewed chronologically, it would have most likely been around this time, around A.D. 46 and thus a couple of years after the death of Agrippa, that the famine struck Judea and Antioch sent its offering. The best manuscripts read "to," not "from," Jerusalem, but that would scarcely make sense. Clearly, the two were returning from Jerusalem to Antioch and were set for the following narrative, which took place in Antioch (13:1–3). The NIV has chosen, as most translations do, to follow the more poorly attested reading "from Jerusalem," since the context seems to demand it. Another solution, however, is to put the phrase "to Jerusalem" with "ministry," a construction found elsewhere in

Luke-Acts. The translation would then read, “Barnabas and Saul returned, having finished their ministry to Jerusalem.” In any event, they took a companion along with them—John Mark (cf. 12:12). The church at Antioch would soon send the three of them on a mission (13:1–3) that would result in tremendous success among the Gentiles. The witness to Judea and Samaria had now been well-established. The way to the Gentiles had already been paved by Philip, by Peter, and by the church at Antioch. From this point it would be Paul who above all would take up the Gentile witness and move the gospel to “the ends of the earth.”

## Lesson 6: Whatever It Takes To Pray – Missionary Story

### **George Muller (September 27, 1805 – March 10, 1898)**

George Muller is known throughout the Christian community as a man of prayer. However, it is very interesting to note that his life started out on a different path. Born in Prussia in 1805, no mention is ever made of the family's religious views or convictions other than his father desired for him to become a clergyman. He wanted this not because he wanted George to serve God, rather he wanted that for George because at that time it was one of the more respectable and profitable professions. He also saw it as a good retirement plan for himself.

George's early years did not bode well for him becoming a clergyman. By the age of ten, he was known as a thief and a liar. He left his father's home as a young teen to continue his life of deception, lying and stealing. He landed in prison before he was 16. His father was finally notified of his incarceration and made restitution so that George would be released from prison. What George learned from his time in prison was how to be a better liar and do it more persuasively. He used those persuasive skills to get his father to send him to school at Nordhausen the next fall.

George did manage to conduct himself in an outward manner that gained him great favor with the principal of Nordhausen. However, this changed behavior was only an outward façade as he continued to live a secret, sinful lifestyle. It was not until he was 20 years old and agreed to attend a Bible study with a friend that his life began to change. As he read the Bible and attended Christian prayer meetings regularly, he came to realize the power of God and the power of prayer. This is what brought him to bow before God, confess his sin, accept Christ's gift of salvation and seek to follow God in all he did from that time forward. He began preaching in nearby churches and determined that he wanted to become a missionary.

It was his interest in reaching Jewish people with the Gospel that took Muller to England. However, God changed the direction of his ministry shortly after his arrival in England. Rather than ministering to the Jews, God allowed him opportunities to preach in different place and to different groups. God began teaching him the power of prayer. George learned that it was only by going to God in prayer, asking God what the people should hear and obeying God's direction for his sermon that people would listen to the sermons and their lives were changed.

One of the things that George began to pray earnestly about was his desire to be married. God answered his prayers by bringing Mary Groves into his life and they were married on October 7, 1830. Their marriage began with the practice of praying about everything. Together they made the decision to trust God for everything in their lives, including funds to live. George gave up his salary from the church, and trusted God for every need. They learned to trust God in the moments when He supplied in a mighty way, and in the moments when the answer to prayer did not come in the time or way they expected.

Through the work of an agency that Muller founded in England which provided various types of assistance to Christian schools, missionaries and orphans, God opened the door for Muller's life's work. God burdened his heart to pray for the orphans and as he prayed, God showed him that he was the one to build an orphanage. On December 5, 1835, while reading God's Word and praying about the need for an orphanage (so that he could provide for more than just the few that he and his wife could care for in their home), God spoke to him. He read Psalm 81:10, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." George believed that God was speaking to him directly about the orphanage. He immediately prayed and asked God for a building, for one thousand pounds and for suitable individuals to take care of the children. George was praying with purpose and he was praying boldly.

On December 7<sup>th</sup> he received the first shilling for the orphan house, on December 9<sup>th</sup> the first piece of furniture was given and on December 10<sup>th</sup> George received a letter from a couple offering their services to help manage the orphanage without a salary; they also offered all their furnishings and household goods to be used for the orphanage. On April 2, 1836 – just four months after George prayed that purposeful, bold prayer – the Orphan House was opened with seventeen children living in it. Ultimately, George Muller established orphanages that cared for as many as 2,000 orphans at any one time. Orphanages for babies, for younger children, and for older children.

Throughout his life George Muller continued to live a life of prayer – he was always diligent and humble in his prayers, never demanding that God do anything only trusting God to supply the needs in His time and in His way. Many times, George’s faith was tested as he waited expectantly for God to answer. One of the best-known stories of the faith of George Muller and the faithfulness of God to answer his prayers is told by a daughter of one of Muller’s workers. She often spent time at the orphanage. The children were all seated at the long dining table for morning prayer and breakfast. Only Muller and the workers knew that there was no bread, no milk, no food of any kind for the children to eat that morning. With the children seated at the table George in faith prayed and thanked God for the bread that He was going to give them to eat. Before Muller finished praying there was knocking at the door. It was the town baker who declared that he had not been able to sleep the night before because he was sure that God wanted him to bake bread for the children at the orphanage. He got out of bed, went to his kitchen and began to bake the bread he was now delivering. Muller accepted the bread and turned to the children and told them that they didn’t only have bread for breakfast – they had FRESH bread. Almost immediately there was another knock at the door. This time the person at the door was a man with a milk cart. The man told George that his milk cart had broken down on the road outside the orphanage and he couldn’t complete his deliveries. He asked if the orphanage could use the milk because it was going to spoil before he could get his cart repaired and complete his deliveries.

God honored George Muller’s humble prayer of thanksgiving that he prayed prior to the meal. God provided bread AND milk for the children. If God will honor the bold, humble prayer of George Muller that morning, He will also honor our prayers.

George Muller prayed for others needs as well and often gave to others out of his limited resources, especially to missionaries. He had often asked Hudson Taylor to pray for him and for the needs of the orphanages. There was a time when word came to George that Hudson Taylor had a great need as a result of riots that had destroyed much of his work in China. George wrote a letter to Hudson Taylor and included a check from his own meager bank account to help a fellow missionary in his time of need.

George Muller’s work was monumental. Several orphanages were built to care for England’s orphans. It is well documented that the children in the orphanages were happy, well cared for and educated in academics, music and the Word of God. However, his greatest legacy was his example of always being faithful in prayer. Praying with a purpose – asking God for a specific need, praying boldly, praying diligently without giving in to doubt and distrust. He also left us the example to pray with humility, and to pray with thanksgiving even when we can’t see the answer.

**George Muller’s life exemplified whatever it takes to pray.**