

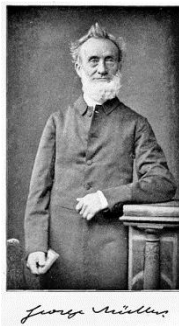
Praying to Make a Difference

Time passes. This summer marks 30 years since I finished my academic career. Even though I earned my doctorate, most people still refer to me as "Hey ... you." My doctoral project centered on leading the church congregation to use prayer as a ministry, and in my research and preparation, I read around 110 books on prayer.

"So, Lynn, 30 years later, what do you still remember from all your reading?"

I'm glad you asked. Thirty years later, two names still stick out.

George Müller. Beginning in 1838, Müller ran a group of orphanages. He started in his own rented home, but eventually, his ministry grew to 2000 boys and girls in several large homes. The amazing thing was Müller's trust in God. Maintaining multiple homes, managing a staff, and providing food and clothing for so many kids was costly and time-consuming, but Müller never asked for a single donor. He prayed and trusted God to provide. His multiple biographies are full of stories of the varied ways God answered Müller's trusting prayers. Even if the orphanage was down to its last coin, unsolicited money would arrive just in time. Müller never asked help from anyone but God. And God always answered.



Rees Howells. Howells is probably not as well known as George Müller, but he was no less of a pray-er. Howells was known as an intercessor, someone who faithfully and consistently stood before God in prayer on behalf of others. He was deeply moved by the Welsh Revivals of 1904-05, and began a lifelong ministry of prayer. His biography is worth reading, so let me sum it up this way: Howells dedicated his life to praying for others. In 1924 he opened the Bible College of Wales in order to teach the principles of faith and intercession. Even as George Müller never solicited funds for his orphanages, Howells led those associated with the Bible college to sustain it through faith and through prayers.

In the evangelical church today, certain names automatically come to mind when we think of great Christian leaders. Typically, we think of those who are great preachers, evangelists, or gifted writers. But I also think of people who live lives of intense prayer—the 21st-century versions of Müller and Howells. In fact, of this group of intense pray-ers, Müller and Howells are the exceptions in that we know who they are. The overwhelming majority of those who move

mountains with their incredible faith and prayer life are unknown to the world.

What I love about these unknown pray-ers is they don't need a great platform to make an impact for the kingdom of God. I'm going to let you in on a little secret about Christian book publishers: they are more drawn to potential authors who have a "platform," a way for lots of people to know them (and buy any books they might write). Of course, most of them have that platform because they have a strong message, and God has gifted them to speak and communicate.

But the "anonymous" pray-ers are just as powerful and impactful for the kingdom of God. They may not be known by the masses, but they are known by the One who takes their faith and prayers and does great things.

We readily nod our heads in agreement when someone says, "Prayer changes things," but those who've embraced prayer as a ministry—an intense activity of intercession—they live it. And to be accurate, they know that prayer itself does not change anything. It's our faith in the loving, almighty God of the universe which leads us to pray to Him who makes a difference. In faith, these pray-ers look to God who is the One who changes things.

There's one aspect of the life of Hannah in 1 Samuel that I find so wonderful. She wanted a child and, in her despondency, she went to God with her request. When Eli told her, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant the request you've made of him," "Hannah went on her way; she ate and no longer looked despondent" (1 Sam. 1:17-18). To the outsider, NOTHING HAD CHANGED! But for Hanna, everything changed. She prayed, received the priest's blessing, and went on her way in full trust of the One to whom she prayed.

That's faith-filled praying.

Hannah prayed with confidence because she knew God hears. George Müller and Rees Howells followed her example and made a world of difference in 19th and 20th-century England.

What about today in 2019? If we would set down our TV remotes, computers, tablets, and smartphones, we could devote that time to faith-filled praying. We won't be famous. We won't get a "name" or a following in the American church, but we will make an incredibly huge difference in the kingdom of God.

