

Dwight Lyman Moody: The Dynamic Life

Paraphrased and expanded by Dan Trygg from *They Found The Secret*, by V. Raymond Edman, with additional information from *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians...* by J. Gilchrist Lawson. Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1911.

D. L. Moody was undoubtedly one of the greatest evangelists of all time. The meetings held by Moody and Sankey were among the greatest the world has ever known. They were used by God to arouse the church to new life and activity, and were the means of sweeping tens of thousands of persons into the kingdom of God.

Mr. Moody was one of those "weak instruments" God chose to put to shame the mighty of this world (I Cor. 1:27). He had very little education before his conversion to Christ. At seventeen years of age he could scarcely read or write, ...and in a Bible class he could not turn to the book of John, but searched for it in the Old Testament. After his conversion, however, **he diligently applied himself to overcome his poor beginnings and became a proficient scholar.** Furthermore, few men have learned so much in the school of observation. He was very pragmatic, and was quick to pick up and put to use any method or strategy that seemed to be effective.

Dwight Lyman Moody was of old New England Puritan stock. For 7 generations, or 200 years, his ancestors lived the quiet lives of farmers in the Connecticut Valley. Moody inherited the vigorous constitution and hardy common sense of the typical New Englander. **He was born February 5, 1837, in the town of Northfield, Massachusetts, where he afterwards founded his famous Bible schools.** He was the 6th of 9 children. His home town was always very dear to him, and it was one of the greatest pleasures of his life to return to it after a long and arduous evangelistic campaign.

Moody's father died at the early age of forty-one, and left his widow in poverty with a mortgage on the home and seven children to support. Twins were born some months after his death. **The creditors seized everything they could, even to the firewood,** and the children had to stay in bed until school time to keep warm. A brother of the widowed mother then came to their rescue and helped to relieve their immediate needs.

In their extremity, the town's Unitarian minister was very kind to them. All the Moody children attended his Sunday school, and were enlisted to bring in other children. Thus it happened that **young Moody began his successful career as a Sunday school worker at a Unitarian church.** The family was so poor that the boys would carry their socks and shoes in their hands on their way to church, to save them from wear, and when in sight of the church would put them on. Dwight thought it hard, after working all week, to *have to go to church* and listen to a sermon he did not understand. He was later grateful that **his mother had enforced the discipline of weekly church attendance upon him,** because **he had acquired the habit of going to church.** He did not feel right if he missed a week. This kept him on the right path.

At ten years of age Dwight had to leave home with another brother to work at a place about thirteen miles away for room and board. This nearly broke his mother's heart, as she had striven so hard to keep the family together. He was fondly attached to his mother and sorrowed over leaving her. **When he arrived at the new place an aged man gave him a penny and encouraged him to "Trust the Lord". He never forgot that experience.**

At seventeen years of age, Moody, tired of farm life and ambitious to work his way upward in the world, decided to go to Boston. He arrived there without any money. He tried in vain to find work, until he was almost in despair. **He was hired by his mother's brother to work in his shoe store, with the condition that he regularly attend his uncle's church.** He succeeded well as a salesman, and went to the Mount Vernon Congregational Sunday School. Having little schooling, he initially said little in class. Gradually, **he became deeply interested in the study of the Bible,** and finally took part in the discussions in the class. **His teacher, Mr. Kimball, took great interest in him, and bit by bit taught him the plan of salvation. He paid Moody a visit at work, and led him to Christ in the back of the shoe store.**

As soon as the young shoe clerk in Boston came to assurance of faith in the Savior, he began to seek others who likewise needed salvation. With little education, but *with great earnestness,* he sought the wanderer and the wicked that they, too, might come to know the forgiveness of God and newness of life in Christ. **He was a witness for the Savior in his place of employment and in all of his associations.**

Moody's whole life was now changed, and became one of joyful Christian service. "Before my conversion," says he, "I worked *towards* the Cross, but since then I have worked *from* the Cross. Previously, I had worked *to become* saved, now I work *because* I am saved." Again, he says: "I remember the morning on which I came out of my room after I first trusted Christ. I think the sun shone a good deal brighter than it ever had before." **His first appeal for church membership was rejected, however, because his understanding of Christian doctrine was so incomplete and unclear.** After a year, he applied again, and was accepted into membership at the church.

In 1856, the second year after his conversion, Moody went to Chicago. There he joined a Congregational Church and became a very active Christian worker. **He put his soul and energy into the work of winning men to Christ.** *Day and night,* Moody was finding ways to share his faith. **He was energetically promoting mission Sunday schools, especially for the needy and neglected.** He rented a pew in the church, and filled it with young men every Sunday. Then he rented another, and *another,* ...until he had rented and filled *four* pews! The great revival awakened by Finney spread to Chicago, and Moody was in his element. **Meanwhile, he was prospering in his business, and was promoted at work.**

He came across a little mission Sunday school in Chicago where they had sixteen teachers and only twelve scholars. **He applied to become a teacher there. They consented on the condition that he would find his own scholars.**

That was fine with him. The next Sunday he arrived with eighteen little hoodlums he had gathered from the streets! **He soon had the entire building crowded!** In the fall of 1858, **at age 21, he started another mission school on a larger scale in another part of the city.** The large hall was soon overcrowded. **Before long, the school numbered 1,500! At this, Moody decided it was time to build a church.** He raised funds by selling shares to purchase bricks for the structure.

Initially, his attempts to speak in public were very awkward. When he first arose to speak in a prayer-meeting, one of the deacons assured him that, in his opinion, he would serve God best by *keeping still*. Another critic, who praised Moody for his zeal in filling the pews at Plymouth Church, said that he should realize his limitations and *not attempt to speak in public*. "You make too many mistakes in grammar," said he. **"I know I make mistakes," was the reply, "and I lack many things, but I'm doing the best I can with what I've got."** He then paused, and looking at the man searchingly, inquired, "Look, here, friend, *you've* got grammar enough — what are *you* doing with it for the Master?"

Because of the obvious outstanding success and fruitfulness of his Sunday school work, at age 23 Moody felt compelled to leave his successful business career, and devote all his time to Christian work.

His Sunday school was so great a success that it made him famous all over the country! Inquiries concerning his methods of work came from all directions, and people traveled thousands of miles to learn them. **He was invited many places to address Sunday school conventions and to help organize Sunday school work.**

In the dreadful days of the War between the States, **he was active in witnessing among the troops and the prisoners of war.** He also served with the Christian Commission in its ministry of mercy to the wounded and dying.

In addition, Moody became one of the most prominent Young Men's Christian Association workers in America. He was heavily involved in the Chicago Y.M.C.A., even serving as part-time staff for a couple of years. **It was at the 1870 Y.M.C.A. convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, that he first met Ira D. Sankey.** **Moody was so impressed by his singing that he asked him to join him to sing in ministry meetings.** They held their first open air meeting together in that city, with great success. Some months later, Sankey left his business and joined Mr. Moody in his work.

In 1867 Mr. Moody made up his mind to go to Great Britain and study the methods of Christian work employed in that country. ***It was during this first visit to Britain that Moody heard the words which set him hungering and thirsting after a deeper Christian experience. This marked a new era in his life.*** The words were spoken to him by Mr. Henry Varley, a well known evangelist. As they sat together on a seat in a public park in Dublin, Varley said, **"The world has yet to see what God will do with and for and through and in and by the person who is fully consecrated to Him."** Moody thought, "He said 'a person'. He did not say, a 'great person', nor a 'learned person', nor a 'smart person', but simply 'a person.' *I am 'a person', ... and it lies with that individual himself whether he will or will not make that entire and full consecration. I will try my utmost to be that person.*"

By God's providence he was led to the ministry of an evangelist. He was called and gifted to present the claims of Christ to large audiences both in America and in the British Isles. *He was a dynamo of feverish activity and apparent effectiveness in those early years, yet deep in his own heart there was a dissatisfaction that increased to the point of desperation.* As is so often the case, **the Almighty used a humble man to bring Moody to the end of his own resources, and then to realize the riches of God's glorious power.** This elderly man, whose name history has not recorded, **was the first to indicate to the rising evangelist that the anointing of God's Spirit was somehow limited or absent from his ministry.** It happened when Moody went down from Boston to New York to speak. While there, he was invited to address a little Sunday school. In speaking of the incident, **Moody later said that it probably influenced him more than any other single experience in his life.** As he was getting into the carriage to hurry from the Sunday school to another service, he was touched on the shoulder by an old man whose white hair was blowing in the wind. With his finger pointing at Moody, he said, **"Young man, when you speak again, honor the Holy Spirit."** "I got into the carriage," said Moody, "and drove away, but the voice was continually ringing in my ears; yet *I did not understand it.* It was six months afterwards before God revealed to me the meaning of that message -- that **I was to be entirely dependent upon the Holy Spirit.** From that day to this, I seldom stand before a great audience where I don't see that old man, with his outstretched finger, and hear his voice, 'Honor the Holy Spirit.'"

In Chicago, there were two godly women who attended Moody's meetings in Farwell Hall, Mrs. Sara A. Cooke and her friend, Mrs. Hawxhurst. As they listened, a great burden came on their hearts that this precious man of God needed to be filled with the Spirit. Mr. Moody recalled:

"I can myself go back and remember two holy women who used to come to my meetings. It was delightful to see them there, for when I began to preach I could tell by the expression of their faces they were praying for me. At the close of the Sabbath evening services they would say to me, 'We have been praying for you.' I said, 'Why don't you pray for the people?' They answered, 'You need power.' 'I need power,' I said to myself, 'why, I thought I had power!' I had a large Sabbath school, and the largest congregation in Chicago. There were some conversions at the time, and I was in a sense satisfied. But right along **these two godly women kept praying for me, and their earnest talk about 'the anointing for special service' set me thinking.** I asked them to come and talk with me, and we got down on our knees. **They poured out their hearts, that I might receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit. And there came a great hunger into my soul.** I knew not what it was. I began to cry as never before. The hunger increased. I really felt that *I did not want to live any longer if I could not have this power for service.* I kept on crying *all the time* that God would fill me with His Spirit."

Then came the great Chicago fire. On the evening of that memorable night in 1871 when one-third of the city was laid in ashes and thousands were left homeless, Moody had preached in Farwell Hall. It was later consumed in the fire. **With the institutions which he had founded in ruins, Moody went East** to appeal for funds, but he said:

"My heart was not in the work of begging. I could not appeal. ***I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit.*** Well, one day, in the city of New York -- oh, what a day! -- I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; *it is almost too sacred an experience to name.* Paul had an experience of which he didn't speak for fourteen years. I can only say that ***God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand!***

I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths, and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world -- it would be as the small dust of the balance."

The sermons were not different; but the servant was!

The truths were not new; but now they were pungent and penetrating!

A few had been converted before; now converts came by the hundreds!

Before, it had been the earnest energy and tireless drive *of the man*; now it was the dynamic *of the Holy Spirit!*

Moody rapidly became famous in his work for the Lord. Two years after his deep spiritual experience in New York City (he was walking on Wall Street at the time that the Holy Spirit came upon him in special power) he and Ira Sankey went to England. After three years of ministry in the United Kingdom, Moody returned to Chicago.

More and more Moody's preaching became characterized by the spirit of love. Declared the evangelist:

"The only way any church can get a blessing is to *lay aside all difference, all criticism, all coldness and party feeling, and come to the Lord as one man*; ...and when the church lives in the power of the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, I am sure that many will be added daily to the flock of God. I would like to have the church read that chapter together on their knees . . . and, as you do so, *pray God to apply it with power.* Lately, my earnest prayer to God has been that He would help me to *save more*, ...and I cannot tell you how wonderfully He has answered my prayer. It seems as if you were all much nearer and dearer to me than ever. My heart goes out to you, and I long to see you all coming constantly to God for a fresh supply of love."

Moody was scriptural and sane in his teaching on the filling of God's Spirit. He proclaimed,

"Now I want this thing clearly understood. **We believe firmly that if any person ...has been cleansed by the blood, redeemed by the blood, and been sealed by the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit dwells in him.** And a thought I want to call your attention to is this, that **God has got a good many children who have just barely got life, ...but not power for service.** You might say safely, I think, without exaggeration, that nineteen out of every twenty of professed Christians are *of no earthly account* so far as building up Christ's kingdom! On the contrary, *they are standing right in the way!* The reason is because they have just got *life* and have settled down, and have not sought for *power.* **The Holy Spirit coming upon them with power is distinct and separate from conversion.**

"Let us look and see what God says: If you will look in the third chapter of Luke you will see that all those *thirty years* that Christ had been in Nazareth *He had been a Son*, but after the Holy Spirit came upon Him for service, and He went back to Nazareth and found a place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord God is *upon me* because *He has anointed me* to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, to restore sight to the blind, and set at liberty those who are oppressed.' And then for *three years* we find Him preaching the kingdom of God, casting out devils, and raising the dead, while for the *thirty years* that He was at Nazareth, we hear nothing of Him. **He was a Son all the while, but now He is anointed for service; ...and if the Son of God had to be anointed, do not His disciples need it?** Shall we not seek it? Shall we barely rest with conversion, only?"

"In the 7th chapter of John, 38th and 39th verses, Jesus says: 'He that believes on Me, as the scripture said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this He spoke of the Spirit, which they who believe on Him should receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)' Now, do you tell me that Peter and John and James and the rest of those men had not been *converted* at that time? Had they been three years with the Son of God and had not been born of the Spirit? Had not Nicodemus been born of the Spirit, and had not men been converted before them? Yes, but ***they were saints without power, and must later tarry in Jerusalem until imbued with power from on high.*** I believe we should accomplish more *in one week* than we should *in years*, if we had only this fresh baptism

"It seems to me we have *three classes of Christians*:

(1.) The first class, in John 3, were those who came to Calvary and there got life. They believed on the Son and were saved, and there they rested satisfied. They did not seek anything higher.

(2.) Then in the 4th chapter of John we come to a better class of Christians. There, it was a well of living water bubbling up. There are a few of these, but they are not a hundredth part of the first class.

(3.) But the best class is in the 7th chapter of John: 'Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' *That is the kind of Christian we ought to be...*

"A great many think because they have been filled *once*, they are going to be full for all time after; but O, my friends, we are leaky vessels, and have to be kept right under the fountain all the time in order to keep full. If we are going to be used by God we have to be very humble. A man that lives close to God will be the humblest of men. I heard a man say that God always chooses the vessel that is close at hand. Let us keep near Him."

The service that succeeds, as illustrated in the life of D. L. Moody, was cogently summarized by the late Dr. C. I. Scofield, who spoke at Moody's funeral service in 1899. In part he said: "Doubtless this unlettered New England country boy became what he was by the grace of God. **The secrets of Dwight L. Moody's power were:**

(1.) **He had a definite experience of Christ's saving grace, and he knew it.**

(2.) **He believed in the divine authority of the Scriptures.** The Bible was to him the voice of God, and he made it resound as such in the consciences of men.

(3.) **He was baptized with the Holy Spirit, and he knew it.** It was as definite an experience as his conversion.

(4.) **He was a man of prayer.** He believed in a mighty and unlimited God.

(5.) **He believed in works, in ceaseless effort, in wise provision, in the power of organization, of publicity.**

He expected the supernatural to work, but *through the natural*. He hitched his wagon to a star, but he always kept the wheels on the ground and the axles well oiled."

We of this generation who desire deeply and desperately that the Savior use *us* as He did Dwight Lyman Moody, must also be saved by grace and certain of our salvation. We must be men and women both of faith, and of the works that arise out of that faith. We must be servants who are filled with the Spirit and who overflow with "rivers of living water".

Observations from D. L. Moody's Life

Came to Christ at age 17 by the personal outreach of his Sunday school teacher.

Uneducated and unskilled. Knew little of the Bible or theology.

Through persistent effort, came to understand the Scriptures, and Bible doctrine.

From the beginning, was a gifted organizer and personal worker.

He served Christ joyfully, with great fervor and activity.

Was an awkward public speaker. Was told repeatedly that *speaking was not his gift!*

Again, through perseverance and repeated practice, he became a popular speaker.

At age 30, after 13 years as a Christian, committed to be a man totally consecrated to God.

God opened up an evangelistic ministry with Ira Sankey in Great Britain.

Apparent successes, but a growing dissatisfaction and desperation for God.

Was challenged to be "filled with the Holy Spirit for special service".

Received prayer for this, which created a deeper hunger and desire for the Spirit.

Prayed "all the time" for the anointing of and filling with the Holy Spirit.

At age 34, the Chicago fire consumed his ministry center, and he traveled east.

While on Wall Street, *God revealed Himself and His love* in a deeper, powerful way.

From that day on, the effectiveness of his preaching was noticeably greater.

He became famous, and traveled the world preaching for Christ.

From book royalties, he started several training schools, which continue to this day.

It is estimated that over *100 million people* heard the gospel from his lips!

God Hunt 8: God Gives The Holy Spirit To Those Who Diligently Seek

Luke 11:1-13

Acts 1:4-14

2:1-39

4:29-31

5:32

8:14-17

9:1-18

10:1-48

Hebrews 11:1,2,6