

Lives Worth Imitating – Dwight L. Moody **June 30, 2019**

This morning I'm very excited to continue on in a series I began last week entitled "Lives Worth Imitating". And I want to begin by thanking many of you for your many excellent suggestions on different individuals to preach on. I received many more than this summer preaching series will allow – so the series may be continued or preached again in the future.

This morning we're going to be looking at what many considered perhaps the greatest evangelist who's ever lived and certainly was the greatest in the 19th century. Most people estimate that at least **1 million individuals came to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior** through God's use of this individual. Also, many believe that this individual **preached to at least 100 million individuals** during his life of 62 years. Truly astounding numbers.

The person I'm referring to is **Dwight Lyman Moody**. Most often he's referred to as **D.L. Moody**. I want to go through basic information about his life and apply some of these principles to us.

- **Dwight L. Moody was born February 5th, 1837** on a small New England farm.
- **When he was only 4 years old his father, Edwin, died.** Edwin was a bricklayer but unfortunately was also a heavy drinker, which contributed to his death.
- Edwin's death left D. L. Moody's pregnant mother, Betsy, with 7 children to raise and then a month later she gave birth to twins, raising the number of children to raise to 9.
- **Moody ended up dropping out of school while still in grade school, in order to work in the fields helping support his family.** This is important to remember. That Moody wasn't a highly educated man. He once said: *"If this world is going to be reached, I am convinced that it must be done by men and women of average talent."* Moody knew of what he spoke. His whole life is a demonstration that God doesn't need you to be highly educated theologically to use you for His glory. He just needs men and women who are fully sold out to Him, which Moody was, and depend upon His strength rather than their own.
2 Corinthians 11:30 (NIV) *If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.*
Moody would certainly say that he worked very very hard for God but it was God's strength and power that allowed him to achieve the kind of success he did.
- **On his 17th birthday, Moody, left home and moved to Boston to seek employment.** He got a job in his uncle's shoe store and quickly discovered that he had a gift for selling shoes. And over the next several years made quite a bit of money selling shoes.

But more importantly, his uncle had 4 requirements for his employment.

- No drinking – his father was an alcoholic and died from it
- No smoking – he didn't have any money to buy smokes
- No chewing tobacco – he didn't like the taste of it
- Had to go to church every Sunday – didn't like that but needed a job.

Moody found church quite boring, but his youth group leader took him under his wing. One day, this teacher, **Edward Kimball**, walked into the shoe store and told him that he wanted him to know how much Christ loved him. And then he said, *"Son, the Lord Jesus Christ loves you and he died for you on a cross. If you don't ask Jesus into your heart – you're going to die in your sins and spend eternity in Hell. Will you not give your heart to Jesus?"* Right there, in the back of the shoe store, Moody knelt down and accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. He said that after that he stepped outside and everything had changed. He said, *"I was in a new world. The birds sang sweeter, the sun shone brighter. I've never known such peace."* Let me ask you, have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? And if not, why not?

- **About a year later, Moody moved to Chicago and began working for another uncle in his shoe store.** He joined a mission band of the First Methodist Church, visiting and distributing tracts at hotels and boarding houses. They went into some of the worst areas in Chicago. Areas where even the police wouldn't go. Moody was struck with the sad plight of many of the kids, who's parents were passed out daily from drinking alcohol. His heart broke for these kids and he resolved that he was going to do what he could to reach them for Christ. He discovered a Sunday School being led on the corner of Chicago and Wells and offered to help. He began going out into the streets recruiting kids to come. The first week he brought in 18 students, which doubled that Sunday Schools attendance. And it kept on building from there. Moody was consumed with getting these kids to Sunday School each week. At one point he expanded his techniques to entice the kids to come. He arranged for free pony rides and would provide free apples and candy to entice kids to come. And kids continued to respond. In the fall of 1858 he started his own Sunday School in an abandoned freight car, but he quickly outgrew that and moved to an old vacant saloon. But he quickly outgrew that as well and the former mayor of Chicago gave him the hall over the city's North Market for his meetings, rent free. Eventually the Sunday School grew to 1,500 kids weekly. Moody recruited teachers, supervised the whole program and got up early on Sunday's to clean out the debris from the dance the night before.
- **In June 1860, Moody decided to abandon secular employment and go into the Lord's work full time.** He was only 23 at the time and was making \$5,000 annually as a shoe salesmen, which was a lot of money back in 1860. Many believe that if he'd have stayed selling shoes he'd have easily made over a million dollars during his career. But God's love for people had grabbed his heart and he had this burning desire for people to come to know the Lord. There's a story told of him spotting this young boy one time down the street and he invited him to come to Sunday School. The boy turned him down. So, Moody offered him an apple or candy, but the boy still turned him down. The boy turned and began running and Moody, all 260 pounds of him, began running after him. Up one street and down another until the young boy ran into a local saloon. Moody chased him in there and was in the process of chasing him into the back room of the saloon when the saloon owner, and also the boy's father, picked up a large butcher knife yelling at Moody – *"You're that crazy man" who's been converting all the people to the Lord and thus wrecking our business. Get out of here right now or I'll kill you.*" The Holy Spirit convicted Moody to ask the man about his soul. So, Moody said, *"You're losing money but you're also losing your soul. Why not save yourself and your family by turning your life over to the Lord."* At that, the saloon owner dropped his knife and also dropped to his knees and accepted the Lord. Shortly after that, he closed his saloon to go into the ministry. And many years later, when he retired from a long ministry at his church, that very son, who Moody was chasing through the saloon, took over his father's ministry.

At one point, Moody made a commitment to the Lord that he would never let a day go by in which he wouldn't share the Lord with at least one individual. And there are many great stories of him carrying this out. One night Moody had crawled into bed exhausted after a very long day of ministry, and the Holy Spirit reminded him that he hadn't shared the gospel with anyone that day. Moody tried to bargain with God that he'd gladly share with 5 people the next day if God would just give him a pass for this day, and besides it was raining outside. But the Holy Spirit was unrelenting and so, Moody got out of bed, grabbed an umbrella and walked out into the dark wet night. As he walked he spotted a man leaning up against a light pole. So, Moody approached him and asked him if he knew that God loved him. At this point the man looked at Moody and began to weep. Moody shared with him that God sent Jesus to die on a cross for his sins and invited him to accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior. The man, weeping tears of sorrow and joy did. And in their conversation, he revealed to Moody that he was on his way to the river to kill himself because he didn't think his life mattered to anyone – let alone God.

Q: Who have you reached out and shared Christ with lately?

- **On August 28, 1862, Moody married Emma Charlotte Revell**, who was one of the workers in his children's Sunday School program. She was 19 and he was 25. They ended up having 3 children: Emma, William and Paul.
- **During the Civil War, Moody worked as a chaplain among the soldiers**, on both sides, showing them God's love and inviting them to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.
- **When he was only 26 years old, he raised \$20,000 to erect the Illinois Street Church with a seating capacity of 1,500.** When it opened its doors it began with 12 members. But over the years was filled to overflowing.
- **In 1867, at the age of 30, Moody and his wife went over to England, partly because of wife's asthma and partly because he was invited to speak at a church.** During his stay over there he ended up preaching in many cities and churches and thousands of people came to accept Jesus Christ as God worked in mighty ways through Moody. One of the most significant things that happened during this trip was he heard **Evangelist Henry Varley** say, *"The world has yet to see what God will do with and for, and through, and in, and by, the man who is fully consecrated to Him."* This struck Moody deeply and he made a covenant with God, that by God's grace and strength, he would be that man. And from all appearances it seems that Moody kept that commitment.

Q: could that be said of you - that you're totally sold out to serving God with everything you have and are?

- **Another significant event in Moody's life was hearing Ira A. Sankey sing at a YMCA convention in July of 1870.** Sankey sang, "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood". Afterwards, Moody approached Sankey and said, *"You've got to come to Chicago and help me. I've been looking for you for 8 years."* Sankey soon left his post office job in Pennsylvania and joined Moody in Chicago in 1871. From that point on, this duo became a sensation. Many people were first moved by Sankey's powerful voice and obvious conviction of the Lord and then Moody would preach and people were convicted by the Holy Spirit to turn their lives over to the Lord.
- **Later in October of that same year, Moody was finishing up a Sunday night sermon and told the people to think about their relationship with Lord and spend the week praying about it.** And next Sunday come back and Moody believed that many of them would come back and turn their lives over to the Lord. Tragically, that group of people never reconvened because that night the great Chicago fire swept through the city destroying many buildings, including their worship center and many people's lives were lost forever. This haunted Moody the rest of his life and he decided that he would never end a service again without giving individuals a chance to turn their lives over the Lord.
- **The last significant event of Moody's life that I'd like to highlight involves a couple of ladies in his church.** These ladies were there faithfully Sunday after Sunday listening to and praying for Moody. At one point, Sarah Cooke approached Moody and mentioned that her and her friend had been faithfully praying for Moody that he would receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon him which would change his life and allow him greater power in his preaching. Moody thanked Ms. Cooke but wasn't entirely convinced he needed that. However, after considering their thoughts and praying about he asked if he could meet with them. So, weekly they met and he prayed with them. But nothing remarkable happened. Sarah reported that on the Friday before the great Chicago Fire, *"Mr. Moody's agony was so great that he rolled on the floor and in the midst of many tears and groans cried to God to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire, like the early disciples were)".* Following the fire, Moody went to New York City to raise funds to rebuild the church and the YMCA building. While walking down a street one day, suddenly it seemed like the heavens opened up and the Holy Spirit was poured out upon him. He quickly went to friends house nearby and asked if he could use a room. He locked himself in the room and for the next several hours the Holy Spirit was poured out upon him in such a powerful way that he ended up asking God to stay His hand lest he die. Moody says

that after that experience his sermons were filled with power unlike prior to this and many more people began to repent of their sins and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

- **Moody went home to be with the Lord on December 22, 1899.** Prior to his death he said these words,

“Some day you will read in the papers that D. L. Moody, of East Northfield, is dead. Don’t you believe a word of it! At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now. I shall have gone up higher, that is all; out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal—a body that death cannot touch; that sin cannot taint; a body fashioned like unto His glorious body.”

During his lifetime, D. L. Moody did many other amazing things that I don’t have time to mention.

- He established **three colleges**
- He established what is now known as the **Moody Bible Institute**
- He **published sold hymn books** and which brought in lots of money. But Moody refused to profit from their sale and instead gave all of the money to be used in ministry efforts.
- One of Moody’s sons remembered him as a *“stout and bearded Peter Pan, a boy who never really grew up.”* He did everything on a dramatic scale. He took ice-cold water baths 3 times a day. He was a wonderful storyteller and relished practical jokes.

Preacher R.A. Torrey was one of Moody’s closest friends, was mentored by Moody and often traveled around and preached with him. After Moody’s death, he preached a sermon entitled **Why God Used D.L. Moody**. In the sermon he said the whole secret of why D.L. Moody was such a mightily used man of God can be found in **Psalm 62:11** *“One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard: “Power belongs to you, God, and with you Lord, is unfailing love”; and “You reward everyone according to what they have done.”*

Moody was convinced that if you showed people the love of God in practical and creative ways that they would quite likely be inclined to turn and repent of their sins and turn their lives over to the control of Jesus who demonstrated his love for them by dying on a cross.

Torrey ended his sermon with **2 Chronicles 16:9 (NIV)** *“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”* And he ended with: **“I believe God found such a man in Dwight L. Moody.”**

Q: Does God find that in you as well?

Tomorrow night, in Life Group, we’re going to be looking more into Torrey’s insights on the life of Dwight L. Moody and how these insights could be applied to our lives as well. I want to invite you to join us in the Welcome Center from 6:30-8pm tomorrow evening.

Invitation hymn:

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- Dwight L. Moody was born _____
- When Moody was only ____ his dad died
- Moody's education went through _____
- At 17 Moody left home to move to _____ and _____
- In Chicago Moody got involved in _____
- In June 1860 Moody decided to go into _____

Q: Who have you reached out and shared Christ with lately?

- What commitment did Moody make with the Lord?
- What happened on August 28, 1862?
- What ministry did Moody do during the Civil War?
- In England he was challenged by this statement by evangelist Henry Varley: *"The world has yet to see what God will do with and for, and _____, and in, and _____, the man who is fully consecrated to Him."*

Q: Could that be said of you – that you're totally sold out to serving God with everything you have and are?

- What significance did the great Chicago Fire have on Moody?
- Moody went home to be with the Lord on _____

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Q: Does God find that in you?

What strikes you most about the life of D.L. Moody?

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