

D.L. Moody: His Message for Today by Charles R. Erdman (Fleming H. Revell Co., 1928) (27 Quotes Selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Talk to Neighbor about Relationship with Christ

The mention of Moody's impelling initiative embodies the first, possibly the supreme message from his life for the Church today. It constitutes a call to renewed personal experience of a Christian life. Our social sympathies are strong, our desire for world evangelization is real, but who of us today talks to his neighbor about their relationship to Christ? [Page 29]

2. Witnessed to Every Stranger

"Are you a Christian?" he asked a man in Chicago, as he invariably asked every stranger he met.

"It is none of your business," was the reply.

"Yes, that is my business," he answered. "Then," said the stranger, "you must be D.L. Moody." [Page 30]

3. Share Your Experience with Christ with Others

Sudden surprise and personal conversation are not the only ways of winning souls for Christ. A book may be suggested, or a speaker; an invitation may be given to a place of worship, or to unite with a church. It is not so much a question of method as of motive. Is one's Christian experience real, and is there a desire to share it with others? If so, some way will be found to give expression to that desire. When in any man that desire deepens into a passion, it will mold his character and will shape his career. Such was the experience of Dwight Lyman Moody. [Page 30]

4. Had a Divine Message, Delivered with Power

Dwight Lyman Moody was a mighty prophet of God. This does not mean that he was perfect in disposition, a giant in intellect, an ascetic in habits, or that he devoted his time to predicting future events. It does imply that he had a divine message which he delivered with conviction, with clearness and with convincing power.

A prophet is a man who speaks for God; foretelling may be part of his task. There need be nothing eccentric in his personal appearance or his manner of life; he does not always live in a wilderness or confine his diet to locusts and wild honey; he may be notably human, and live as a man among men. But he must know God and His word, and be empowered by His Spirit. He must know men and love them and speak in a tongue which they can understand.

All these things were true of Mr. Moody. [Page 38]

5. Give God All His Time

“I have decided to give God all my time” said Moody.

“But how are you going to live?” asked his friend.

“God will provide for me if He wishes me to keep on, and I shall keep on until I am obliged to stop.” [Page 38]

6. Prayed All the Time

Prayer was perfectly natural for Mr. Moody. As to its baffling mysteries he felt no concern. He did not make long prayers. His seasons of private prayer were confessedly brief. However, he prayed at all times and in all places and as to all matters which were of the least concern to him or his work. [Page 39]

7. Knew the Bible

A prophet must have a divinely inspired message. Moody found his in his Bible. That was the one book he knew, but he knew that book; at least he knew its contents, and the vital message it had for the hearts and lives of men. [Page 39]

8. Man of One Book

Whatever the influence, however, Mr. Moody became a “man of one book” and his messages were so Scriptural that they came with the authority of one who always was saying in effect, “Thus saith the Lord.” [Page 42]

9. Submissive to God’s Will

The secret of Mr. Moody’s prophesy lies even deeper still. He trusted in the power of God, he dwelt on the Word of God, but he was ever submissive to the will of God. This was the secret of his life. It is an open secret, for the story had been told frequently of the supremely important incident during the same brief visit to England to which reference twice had been made. He heard Henry Varly say: “The world has yet to see what God will do with a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him.” As recorded by his son, the story thus continues: “He said *a man* thought Moody; he did not say a great man nor a learned man nor a rich man nor a wise man nor a smart man but simply a man. I am a man, and it lies with the man himself whether he will or will not make that entire and full consecration. I will try my utmost to be that man.” [Page 42]

10. Surrender to Will of God

Whenever there is abandonment to the will of God there is an endowment of the Spirit of God. Of this actual experience there are among Christians conflicting statements and explanations. Some persons refer to a “second blessing,” some to an “infilling of the Spirit, ” some to a “baptism for service.” Whatever the essence of the experience is a surrender to the will of God and resultant power from the indwelling Spirit of God. [Page 43]

11. Spiritual Revival

The result was not so much the securing of new converts as the awakening of professed Christians. Mr. Moody made clear to all, the theory on which he ever sought to promote a spiritual revival; namely, the necessity of attempting to reach and persuade individuals to become followers of Christ. As he said to Henry Ward Beecher, “There is no use attempting to make a deep and lasting effect on masses of people, but every effort should be forth on the individuals.” No matter how vast the cross with which he was dealing, this is the principle upon which Mr. Moody always worked. [Page 58]

12. Biblical Positive Preaching

Mr. Moody was seeking to save souls, and he knew that controversialists do not usually win followers for Christ or encourage others to study the Bible. Mr. Moody’s preaching was not only Biblical but it was positive. With negations he had little to do. He avoided religious controversy and believed it did more harm than good. He made great affirmation and set them forth with deep conviction, but he spent little time dealing with those who differed. [Page 84]

13. Simple Illustrations Gave Moody Popular Appeal

Imagination need not make one fanciful or inaccurate; in fact it is a gift, which alone can make one to reproduce reality. It enables a speaker to see the thing he is endeavoring to make his auditors see, and unless he sees it, they never will. It enables him further, to select the right illustration to emphasize and clarify the truth he is presenting. Particularly is it helpful in doing what Mr. Moody could do so strikingly; namely, make Bible scenes real and vivid, and cause Bible characters to live in the minds of his hearers. This colorful imagination and this skillful use of simple illustrations were among the chief factors, which gave Mr. Moody’s preaching such a tremendous popular appeal. [Page 85]

14. Very Practical Preaching

His message was vital. He never dealt with abstractions. He did not appear to be defending dogmas, but to be deeply concerned with life. His discussions were intensely practical. He dealt with the experiences of every day. He described human joys and sorrows, and temptations and sins and hopes and fears; and taught men and women how these could be met, and how all the experiences of time can be viewed in the light of eternity. [Page 85]

15. Sermons Repeated

His sermons became widely known. As the years moved on he was accustomed to repeat them again and again. “No sermon is worth much,” he is quoted saying, “until it has been preached at least fifty times.” [Page 89]

16. Appealed to the Heart

He realized that the head can often be reached best by an appeal to the heart. He was seeking to secure in each hearer the surrender of his will, and he knew this could be secured not only illumining the intellect, but by stirring the emotions. Yet there was

nothing merely sentimental in his addresses. Their prevailing notes were downright sincerity and absolute reality and this made them throb with vitality and pulsate with life. [Page 86]

17. Could Adapt Others' Material to Make It His Own

No one would dream of accusing Mr. Moody of plagiarism. Everything he touched he stamped with character that made it his own. Yet no speaker ever seized more eagerly upon any material, from any source, which he felt would make his message more appealing and forceful. He always carried a notebook and he would jot down any phrase any illustration any sermon outline, which he thought could be of use. And he had no compunctions of conscience in repeating them when occasion offered.

In speaking of his early ministry one of his biographer's remarks, "He reckoned all sermons and addresses which he heard or read as so much lawful plunder. Of this he made no secret. He would sometimes say to a minister; "I heard you preach from such a text, at such a place and I went home and preached that same sermon to my people" He found a discourse in a little tract entitled: Quench Not the Spirit," and he preached it with such telling effect that twenty persons were converted by it."

In his later years, at the Northfield Conferences, he was always alert to adopt any statement that he regarded as of special value. In a company of teachers, one day, he called upon one after another by name to give a "nugget" the "best thing you have written down in your Bible." In turn he called upon L.W. Munhall.

"What nuggets have you?"

"I have some," replied the evangelist with a twinkle in his eye, "but I hesitate to give them."

"Why?" inquired Mr. Moody, "Let's have them!"

"No," insisted Munhall with a smile, "if I should, you would take them down and repeat them in one of your great meetings, and then the next time I used them I would be accused of stealing from Moody."

"Well, then," replied Mr. Moody, greatly amused, "let some brother now speak who is not so much afraid for his reputation."

Mr. Moody is quoted as saying on another occasion; "When I get hold of a man who is versed in the Word of God, I just pump him. It is a great privilege to have the thought that these men have been digging for all their lives."

Yet these statements must not be misinterpreted. Mr. Moody did not repeat a thought or phrase until it had been incorporated into his thinking and unless he employed it in a connection that made it original and unique. [Pages 88-89]

18. Restrained and Scriptural Utterances Regarding Prophecy

The only point as to which the teachings of Mr. Moody were said to diverge from the common body of Christian belief were as to his interpretation of prophecy. Yet the most careful scrutiny of his sermons can discover little in this connection that is extravagant or fanciful or absurd. In fact his utterances were peculiarly restrained and Scriptural. As to the return of Christ, he simply affirmed with the Church of all the ages; “He sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence He shall care to judge the quick and the dead ... I believe in ... the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.”

He was called a “pre-millennialist” because he did not affirm that a “millennium” of peace and righteousness must intervene between this present age and the coming of Christ.

He taught that no one knew when Christ would return. He never set any dates for Christ’s appearing. He announced no elaborate program of future events. He did not discuss the “millennium,” nor the details of Christ’s predicted reign. He always taught that the return of Christ might occur within the lifetime of any Christian, that it was the “blessed hope” of the Church, since with it were associated the resurrection of the dead, reunion with loved ones, and blessing for the whole world. [Page 92]

19. Spirit Works by Definite Laws

The Spirit works according to definite laws, there is always a human side to every great spiritual movement. [Page 94]

20. Prayer Had Power

Prayer, in the mind of Mr. Moody, was not a mere convention to be properly observed in connection with religious gatherings; it was an actual power by which results could be obtained. [Page 95]

21. Studied by Subjects for Sermons

As to the “secret” of his sermon-making he said; “I have no secret; I study more by subjects than I do by texts. If, when I am reading, I meet a good thing on any of these subjects, I slip it into the right envelope and let it lie there. I always carry a notebook, and if I hear anything in a sermon that will throw light on the subject, I put it down. Perhaps I let it lie for a year or more. When I want a sermon I take everything that has been accumulating. Between what I find there and the results of my study I have material enough. Then, I am all the time going over my sermon, taking out a little here and adding a little there. In that way they never get very old.” [Page 97]

22. Great Haste to Get the Gospel to Others

He never seemed to have time to give to Daniel more consideration than “Dan’l and Israel was always “Isr’el.” Even as to the pronunciation of Jerusalem, Dr. Pentecost remarked in public; “Anyone who can pronounce Jerusalem in two syllables can do almost anything.” Of this remark considerable notice was taken by the press of

England, and it called forth Spurgeon's characteristic comment: "I thank God there is one man in such hot haste to get the Gospel to the people that he does not stop to pronounce all the syllables of every word." [Page 99]

23. Moody Loved People

The message was always kindly and sympathetic. Passion in public speech often partakes of harshness, of severity, of bitterness. Moody made men feel that he loved them; and he did love them. That was the secret of his power, if there was any secret. He approached his audience with a tender heart. [Page 100]

24. Every Christian Bring Others to a Relationship with Christ

The life of Mr. Moody was no more important message for the present day than is found in his insistence that it is the privilege and duty of every Christian to exert definite personal influence toward bringing others into a vital relationship with Christ and into membership with his church. [Page 102]

25. Immediate Investments

Possibly some evangelist, in matter of finance, may have employed methods not above suspicion; surely Mr. Moody never did. He was on no salary, had no guarantee for any services, and accepted whatever the committee conducting his campaigns might wish to give. He lived simply, educated his family, provided for his wife, and died with only \$500 to his credit. Even that balance was unknown to him. His executors found it in the form of a mortgage that had been drawn in his name by a man he once befriended.

It is true that thousands and thousands of dollars passed through his hands; he had a legal and a moral right to retain large sums; but everything was used immediately for some benevolent or educational or evangelistic purpose.

He believed in immediate investments. Whether in the use of money or talents or time or friends, his one purpose was to make Christ real and regnant in the lives of men. He adopted any proper method and accepted every possible opportunity which promised to accomplish that one great end. [Page 103]

26. Music

The world needs to learn that music in itself is not necessarily either elevating or inspiring or ennobling; everything depends upon the ideas that are associated with the sound. Music stirs the emotions more quickly and more deeply than any other art, but the direction the aroused emotions takes depends altogether upon the words or thought to which the strains have become wedded. For example, the notes of which in the land of its birth was but a trifling love song, bring to all English speaking worshippers the message of "O Sacred Head Now Wounded" and bear us to the foot of the cross. Thus the very simple and artless tune of some Gospel hymn may become truth concerning our divine Lord. [Page 105]

27. Singleness of Purpose, Sincerity, and Reality of Personal Experience
In chief measure his great work and his extraordinary achievements are due to his own singleness of purpose, to his downright sincerity, and to the reality of his personal religious experience.

Yet, above all the permanent influence of Dwight L. Moody must be ascribed to the power of God. He was a man truly surrendered to the divine will, and such a man as always filled with the divine Spirit. His life continues in the lives of his fellowman. His work abides.

In such a man is completely fulfilled that unending praise cut in the headstone of his grave on Round Top: "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever." [Page 154]