

# Revival Stories: D. L. Moody

by E.A. Johnston

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*The sermon emphasizes the urgent need for revival in the church, drawing inspiration from the life and ministry of D.L. Moody.*

**Duration:** 23:01

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 16:9, Joel 2:17, Matthew 16:24, Acts 19:2

**Topics:** "Biography"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about D.O. Moody, a preacher who believed in the power of the unaltered gospel message. While a pastor's conference on evangelism was taking place inside a building, Moody stood outside on a corner, preaching to a group of factory workers gathered around him. He spoke about the old rugged cross and the Christ who hung on it, moving the factory workers to tears. The crowd grew so large that they had to move to the auditorium to hear the rest of Moody's message. The speaker emphasizes the need for the Church to focus on the Great Commission and the crucified life, rather than self-centeredness and the growth of campuses. The sermon also mentions an incident where two elderly ladies approached Moody and told him that they were praying for him.

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## Transcript

We are living in a critical time in which spirituality in the churches is near an all-time low, and immorality in society is near an all-time high. The pulpits of the land have lost their influence upon society, and many Christians are no longer distinguishable from pagans. In our day, worldliness has infiltrated the churches to such a shameful degree that there is no longer any distinction between the church and the world.

In the book of Acts, we read the following, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also. We must ask ourselves the painful, probing question, Why aren't we today turning the world upside down with our brand of Christianity? Is it because our breed of Christianity in the West is so meager and lacking in power that it can barely keep its own churches from dividing, let alone have any significant influence upon the society in which we live? Many have used the man-centered methodologies for church growth, the purpose-driven church, felt-need preaching, seeker services, but when these unscriptural methods are employed, we may have crowds, but we sure don't have the Shekinah. We have done much in the name of Christ, but without the power of heaven through the Holy Spirit, God has forsaken us and left us to our own devices.

Our congregations are dividing through infighting and disharmony. The divorce rate in the church is as high as pagan society, and holiness among believers is as rare today as a lunar eclipse. And where has all this man-centered, flesh-driven methodology gotten us for the past 20 years? Nowhere.

Even though there is a church in every neighborhood in the land, crime and immorality in society increases daily, as if the church did not exist at all. You see, friends, when the church is focused on building programs and enlarging its own empire, it loses its biblical focus. The world perishes while she builds bigger and more comfortable buildings.

The majority of church growth today is not the result of new converts who are born again, but it's believers transferring their membership because they're unhappy where they already are. Where did we go wrong? What will alter this current crisis? To effectively treat an illness, the patient must first admit he is sick. The Church of Jesus Christ in America, Canada, and Great Britain has relied upon self rather than the Holy Spirit.

We have created much fleshly activity and have spent a lot of money on the wrong things. Rather than focus on the Great Commission, we have been self-focused and increasing the size of our campuses. The prophet Joel cries out in anguish, Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord.

Today the church stands in a crisis and sinners stand over a precipice of a Christless and lost eternity. And the typical pastor today is beat up, run down, discouraged, and confused. The major sin of the church today in the West is catering to self rather than the annihilation of self.

The crucified life is a topic seldom taught anymore. The words of Jesus stand in stark contrast to his bride in the West today, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

Recently, I sat listening to a leader of a large Protestant denomination as he gave depressing statistics about the condition of the churches. He stated that the divorce rate and unwed pregnancy rate was as high in the church as out of it. He stated that substance abuse was alarmingly high in the churches, and the average 20-something who grew up in the church leaves it in young adulthood.

He finished this startling message with the call to dig our heels in and try harder. I wanted to rise from my seat and scream, Why, if you have been doing for the last few decades, if it's not working, why keep using the same failed methodologies? It's no wonder that the teenagers are not drawn to the church today, for it has little to offer other than sports, music, and entertainment. They can get that at the local mall.

The church today lacks the one thing needful, the Holy Spirit. When God comes in revival, the youth in the church will not want to go out of the presence of God. They will stay glued to their seats and fall on their faces in praises to the Lord.

This is why it is so critically important to pray and expect God to come in revival to our churches today. If he does not, we are doomed. The culture of today is godless, and if the church lacks power from on high to influence society and transform lives, then it becomes nothing more than a neighborhood fellowship of like-minded individuals who gather weekly to tip their hat to God and occupy themselves with busy activity.

Where is the holy fire emanating from our pulpits? Where are the prophets in the land? Why has the flame gone out? Pastors today are more familiar with burnout than ever before. But it is our lack of spending time with God in a Sinai-like experience in which we come down from the mount with our faces aglow and our hearts burning with a fresh word from the Most High. The problem is that few today are willing to put forth the effort to climb up that mountaintop to get that experience with God.

But God is looking for a man who he can trust with much. 2 Chronicles 16.9 tells us, For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. By the way, that verse from 2 Chronicles 16.9 was D.L. Moody's favorite verse.

Moody loved that verse ever since the day he heard a minister tell him, The world has yet to see what God can do through the man wholly sold out to him. Moody went away saying under his breath, By God's grace, I will be that man. And sure enough, he was.

God used D.L. Moody more than all of us put together. Well, today, friends, in our series of revival stories, we will look at the life of D.L. Moody. Although I would classify what God did with Moody as more sanctified evangelism than true historical revival, there are some instances in Moody's life where God did send revival.

Moody was converted in the back room of a shoe store in Boston where he worked as a clerk. He was a teenager at the time. His Sunday school teacher had a great burden for him and he nervously went on a God sent errand that day to witness to the young Moody.

God did his work that day in that shoe room. D.L. Moody's heart was changed and his life was never the same again. Soon after his conversion, Moody moved to Chicago and there he began to witness to every citizen in that great metropolis.

He refused to go to bed at night without sharing his faith in Christ. One night he got into bed around midnight and he realized he had not witnessed to a lost soul that day. It was pouring rain outside, but Moody got up out of bed, put on his rain gear, and went into the night.

There was a man leaning on a lamppost beneath an umbrella and Moody walked up to him and asked him if he were a Christian. The man was offended and cursed Moody out and called him Crazy Moody. That was the nickname the citizens of Chicago gave Moody, Crazy Moody, because he would stop anybody on the street any time and ask them if they were a Christian.

Well, before I proceed with the story, I must pause and state that during the lifetime of D.L. Moody, the churches in America were populated with a majority of true born-again believers because the nation had just been through the Second Great Awakening and thousands had become born again. And the preaching in Moody's day was still focused on the blood, and the cross, and hell, and judgment to come. So Christian in Moody's day stood out from the rest of society.

So to ask someone if they were a Christian back then was a dividing line whereby today's Christians blend in with the rest of pagan society. Now, back to our story. After Moody asked the man if he were a Christian, the man flew into a rage, doubled up his fists, and cursed Moody.

Moody replied, I'm very sorry if I have offended you. Mind your own business, roared the man. That is my business, Moody replied, as he walked away, returning home to his bed.

Several nights later, there was a knock on his door. It was around 2 a.m. Moody got up to answer the door, and to his astonishment, there was the man who had cursed him for talking to him as he leaned against the lamppost. Moody asked him, What do you want at this late hour? I want to become a Christian, was the reply.

I'm very sorry, said the man. I haven't had any peace since that night. Your words have haunted and troubled me.

I couldn't sleep last night, and I thought I would come and get you to pray for me. Well, that man accepted Christ that night, and then asked Moody what he could do for Christ. Moody put him to work in the Sunday school until the Civil War broke out, and that man was one of the first to be shot down, dying on the battlefield.

I ask the questions, friends. Who have you witnessed to today? Moody just didn't talk about reaching the lost with the gospel. He went out and did it.

Oh God, I would need an ounce of Moody today. That, friends, was D.L. Moody. Let me share another story with you about Moody.

Often today, we hear the phrase that this young preacher is getting outside the box with the gospel. When will we realize that the gospel doesn't need repackaging, but we do need to get on a box and preach the good news of the Son of God? And this brings to mind a story about Moody. One day, in the downtown area of the city, there was a pastor's conference on evangelism being held in the city auditorium.

And inside the building, ministers gathered to discuss different ways to reach the lost with the gospel message. Outside on the corner, stood a layman atop an egg crate. He had a group of factory workers gathered around him.

And these men stood there with their lunch pails in hand. The man on the crate was D.L. Moody. And as he told them about the story of an old rugged cross and the Christ who hung on that cross, several of the factory workers got tears in their eyes.

Soon, the small group became a large crowd, so large, they had to move to the auditorium to hear the rest of Moody's message. The crowd of men, with their lunch pails swinging beside them, sang a hymn as they followed Moody like a Pied Piper to the large hall to hear the rest of his sermon. This was going on the whole time the other ministers were sitting on their duffs talking about how to reach the lost while Moody was out doing it.

Allow me to interject another important incident in the life of D.L. Moody before we proceed. Moody was preaching in his Chicago church one day when two elderly ladies approached him after the service and said, Mr. Moody, we are praying for you. Moody was offended and replied, Me? Why pray for me? Why don't you pray for the people? They insisted that he was the subject of their prayer and that they were praying for him because he lacked something.

What do I lack? he inquired. The two old mothers of Israel who knew their God replied that Moody lacked an anointing of the Holy Spirit when he preached. They told him, we are praying for you because you need power of the Spirit.

Soon, this thought consumed Moody. He began to meet with the two old ladies and prayed with them night after night for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He got so desperate for an anointing he would roll on the floor begging God to touch him from above.

Moody said of this time of resting with God, There came a great hunger in my soul. I did not know what it was. I began to cry out as I never did before.

I really felt I did not want to live. If I could not have this power for service I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit. Well, once 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 never spoke 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.

Well, soon after that experience Moody and his colleague Ira Sankey went to Great Britain and it was there that God really moved in revival. Soon, the Moody and Sankey meetings filled every large hall in Great Britain and Moody could hold the attention of ten thousand people at a time for a month at a time in major cities like Edinburgh, Glasgow, and London. But it all began in a small English town where they both were unknown at the time.

They hung a handwritten sign in a window of the church that said Mr. Moody will preach the gospel tonight and Mr. Sankey would sing it. Well, only a handful came to hear these American strangers that first night. But soon the place was packed with people and night after night the press of the crowd was so thick one could hardly get in the doors of the church.

Moody soon realized that God was at work in a revival. The work of God was so startling it aroused in Moody a desire to locate the reason behind the revival. In speaking with the church's pastor he learned of a church member who was not at the church during this move of grace but in her bed for she was a bedridden invalid a young girl who had seen a picture of Moody in an American newspaper and began to pray to God.

She prayed that God would send this American preacher to her church and for God to use this American in a mighty revival. Moody eventually visited the girl in her bedchamber. Her name was Marianne Adlord.

Now listen to the ending of this remarkable story friends. Twenty nine years later the pastor of that church in England was the great G. Campbell Morgan and he paid this girl a visit for she was still alive and still a member of his congregation. I will let G. Campbell Morgan describe the scene for us.

When in 1901 I was leaving England for America I went to see her. She said to me I want you to reach that birthday book I did so and turning to February the 5th I saw in the handwriting I knew so well D.L. Moody Psalm 91 1 which reads He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty Then Marianne Adlord said to me he wrote that for me when he came to see me in 1872 and I prayed for him every day till he went home to God continuing she said now will you write your

name on your birthday page and let me pray for you until either you or I go home Campbell Morgan then commented I shall never forget writing my name in that book to me the room was full of the presence listen friends that story is loaded with secrets to revival time after time in revival history many revivals began when frail old women or invalids prayed to the Almighty to send revival God is pleased to use the foolishness of this world to do His work allow me to close with the following two brief incidents in the life of Moody and they will give you a better insight to the kind of man Moody was and why God used him so mightily Moody was out walking with a famous Boston preacher one day and the man asked Moody what it felt like now that he was gaining fame on two continents Moody bent over and began scratching on the ground the minister watched in stunned silence as Moody seemed to be playing in the dirt finally Moody stood with his big hand full of fresh dirt spilling over the palm of his hand Moody looked at the man and replied D.L. Moody is no better than this dirt Moody remained a humble man for the rest of his days by the way, did I tell you that Moody was so uneducated he couldn't properly spell the word bed yet God seemed pleased to use this humble man to shake two continents for His glory well let me share this last story with you friends, Moody was in England and shaking Oxford with his spirit anointed preaching in one particular meeting there were about 250 college students gathered in a college chapel where Moody was preaching the choir sang just as I am without one plea Moody prayed every head was bowed then he asked all who had an interest in Christ that they should stand and meet him in the ante room for counseling 200 men stood their feet making a thunderous noise on the wooden floor Moody thought they had misunderstood him and he repeated that only the ones who felt led of the spirit that they were in need of Christ should stand again 200 rose, Moody looking up murmured under his breath my God this is enough to live for and that is true friends there is nothing more important in this life than the salvation of souls I hope that our little stories about D.L. Moody have stirred your heart to pray that God will once again send revival to our shores and visit our nation with a holy ghost revival that will shake this country from coast to coast

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