

D.L. Moody
On Spiritual Leadership
Steve Miller

This One Thing I Do

When we look at all that Dwight Lyman Moody accomplished during more than forty years of ministry, we cannot help but wonder how he could possibly do so much. Biographers estimate he presented the gospel to millions of people through his evangelistic campaigns, quite a feat in the days before modern transportation helps and mass-media outlets that include radio and television. He started schools that trained large numbers of ministers and even more “gap men”—men and women who remained full-time workers or homemakers yet had the training to share the gospel with unbelievers and do productive works or service in their churches. The students and leaders who attended his schools and conferences came from all over the world—and carried his influence back with them to their native lands. His books were published by the hundreds of thousands and widely distributed.

All this from one solitary man who had no ministry training and was essentially illiterate when he started reaching out to the poor children in Chicago’s worst district, the Sands.

One of Moody’s mottoes was “Consecrate, then concentrate.” Set yourself apart for God; then focus on the one supreme goal—that of glorifying God by bearing fruit for His kingdom. “Consecrate, then concentrate” were his words to the thousands who attended his conferences for leaders and ministry workers. Moody reminded his listeners that it’s not our talents, our intellect, our abilities that God wants so much as our whole heart.

Yes, training is always good and desirable. It will enable us to do our service better, and we should strive toward that. But the best knowledge and skills are worthless if we don’t have the right heart—a heart that, among other things, is...

- fully surrendered,
- abounding in love for people,
- passionate for the lost,
- constantly ready to pray,
- dependent upon the Spirit’s power,
- dedicated to God’s Word,
- trusting God,
- fervently committed to holiness, and
- marked by humility.

“This one thing I do” was another one of Moody’s mottoes. In 1874, while in Scotland, Moody wrote to his friend Major Whittle, “I have done one thing on this trip, and the work is wonderful. *One thing* is my motto.”¹

As son William Moody wrote,

Nothing could swerve him from this deep-rooted purpose of his life, and in all the various educational and publishing projects to which he gave his energy there was but one motive—the proclamation of the Gospel through multiplied agencies.²

Son-in-law Arthur Percy Fitt wrote,

I do believe he had one supreme aim in life—to please God, more especially in the salvation of others through faith in Lord Jesus. All his plans in educational and other lines were tributary to that aim. All the elements of his character were conditioned by this devotion. He never lost his first love.³

A major theme of Moody's life is worth recalling: When we give our all to God, He can use us mightily. That doesn't mean He will use us in the same way as He used Moody, or to achieve results similar to those He brought about through Moody's ministry. God gives every leader a different calling and a different stewardship; He places His workers strategically where He needs them most. It's not the size of our ministry or our results that count, but our willingness to take whatever God has entrusted to us and give ourselves wholly to that work. That's what it takes to allow Him to use us mightily.

Read slowly through Moody's powerful exhortations to "do one thing." Take some time now to ponder carefully what your life and ministry might look like—or *could* look like—if these exhortations from Moody drove your life.

*First give yourself up fully, wholly, and unreservedly to the Lord, and then put your life into some channel where you can be used. Consecrate, then concentrate. It is a good thing to get something definite, and go right about it. Make up your mind that your life is going to be given to that one thing.*⁴

*Let us be zealous of good works, let us go forth fired with the fires of heaven; let us make up our minds, that our money, our strength, our time, our all shall be given to Christ. We have but a little time to preach, to toil, to work.*⁵

*Let us be out and out for Christ; let us give no uncertain sound.*⁶

*The trouble with a great many men is that they spread themselves out over too much ground. They fail in everything. If they would only put their life into one channel, and keep it in, they would accomplish something. They make no impression, because they do a little work here and a little work there...Lay yourselves on the altar of God, and then concentrate on some one work.*⁷

And at the end of his life, Moody said to his ministry friends,

*The honor of this world doesn't last; it is transient; it is passing away, and I don't believe any man or woman is fit for God's service that is looking for worldly preferment, worldly honors, worldly fame. Let us get it under our feet, let us rise above it, and seek the honor that comes down from above.*⁸

Have you consecrated yourself?

Are you concentrating on one ultimate goal?

Can you say, "This one thing I do"?

Your answers will be shaped, of course, by whether you're in full-time ministry or you're a "gap man," as Moody would say—that is, ministry is not your occupation, but it's still an active part of your life. But no matter what your circumstances, your background, or your place in life, God *can* use you mightily...when you give yourself to Him mightily.

Consecrate, then concentrate.

And God will use you.