

## "D. L. MOODY AND EDWARD KIMBALL"

(Acts 9:1-22)

(Diane Severance and Dan Graves)

**Dwight L. Moody** didn't attend school beyond the fifth grade; he couldn't spell, and his grammar was awful. His manners were often brash and crude, and he never became an ordained minister. Once, before his conversion, he so outraged an Italian shoe salesman with a prank, that the man chased him with a sharp knife, clearly intending to kill him. Yet, Dwight Lyman Moody was used by God to lead thousands of people to Christ. Moody's life of Christian service began with his conversion on April 21, 1855.

Dwight came to Boston as a teenager from Northfield, Massachusetts, and he felt all alone in the big city. The boy was desperate for work. An uncle took him on as a shoe salesman—on condition that he be obedient and that he attend Mt. Vernon Congregational Church. The young man had been raised in a Unitarian church which denied the full divinity of Christ and did not emphasize the need for salvation from sins. Now Dwight heard about those things. But he decided that he wanted to enjoy the pleasures of the world and wait to get saved until just before he died.

However, the kindness of his Sunday School teacher, **Edward Kimball**, turned young Moody into his life-long friend, and encouraged him to persist in his church attendance and regular Bible reading. Though Moody did try to read the Bible, he couldn't understand it. Kimball later said he had never seen anyone whose mind was as spiritually dark as Dwight's.

On April 21, 1855 Kimball came to the shoe store to ask Dwight to commit his life to Christ. Dwight listened closely and became a Christian that day. Immediately he began sharing his faith with others, including his own family. They wanted nothing to do with his faith. "I will always be a Unitarian," his mother said. (However, she converted shortly before her death.)

And at first Dwight Moody wasn't allowed to become a church member. Asked what Christ had done for him, the nervous boy replied that he wasn't aware of anything particular. Leaders felt that was an unacceptable answer.

When Moody later moved to Chicago he wandered the streets to find young boys to bring to his Sunday School class. He had a passion for saving souls and determined never to let a day pass without telling someone the gospel of Jesus Christ. Often he irritated strangers on the street by asking them if they were Christians, but his pointed questioning stirred the consciences of many. God used the converted shoe salesman to become the leading evangelist of his day.

Estimates vary, but Dwight Moody is thought to have led as many as a million people to confess faith in Christ. Among his many achievements on either side of the Atlantic was the founding of Moody Bible Institute.

