Sympathy

D.L. Moody:

I want to tell you a lesson taught me in Chicago a few years ago. In the months of July and August, a great many deaths occurred among children, you all know. I remember I attended a great many funerals; sometimes I would go to two or three funerals a day. I got so used to it that it did not trouble me to see a mother take the last kiss and the last look at her child, and see the coffin-lid closed. I got accustomed to it, as in the war we got accustomed to the great battles, and to see the wounded and the dead never troubled us. When I got home one night, I heard that one of my Sunday-school pupils was dead, and her mother wanted me to come to the house. I went to the poor home, and saw the father drunk. Adelaide had been brought from the river. The mother told me she washed for a living, the father earned no money, and poor Adelaide's work was to get wood for the fire. She had gone to the river that day and seen a piece floating on the water, had stretched out for it, had lost her balance, and fallen in. The poor woman was very much distressed. "I would like you to help me, Mr. Moody," she said, "to bury my child. I have no lot, I have no money." Well, I took the measure for the coffin, and came away. I had my little girl with me, and she said, "Papa, suppose we were very, very poor, and mamma had to work for a living, and I had to get sticks for the fire, and was to fall into the river, would you be very sorry?" This question reached my heart. "Why, my child, it would break my heart to lose you," I said, and I drew her to my bosom. "Papa, do you feel bad for that mother?" she said. This word woke my sympathy for the woman, and I started and went back to the house, and prayed that the Lord might bind up that wounded heart. When the day came for the funeral I went to Graceland. I had always thought my time too precious to go out there, but I went. The drunken father was there and the poor mother. I bought a lot, the grave was dug, and the child laid among strangers. There was another funeral coming up, and the corpse was laid near the grave of little Adelaide. And I thought how I would feel if it had been my little girl that I had been laying there among strangers. I went to my Sabbath-school thinking this, and suggested that the children should contribute and buy a lot, in which we might bury a hundred poor little children. We soon got it, and the papers had scarcely been made out, when a lady came and said, "Mr. Moody, my little girl died this morning; let me bury her in the lot you have got for the Sunday-school children." The request was granted, and she asked me to go to the lot and say prayers over her child. I went to the grave; it was a beautiful day in June, and I remember asking her what the name of her child was. She said Emma. That was the name of my little girl, and I thought what if it had been my own child. We should put ourselves in the places of others. I could not help shedding a tear. Another woman came shortly after and wanted to put another one into the grave. I asked his name. It was Willie, and it happened to be the name of my little boy; the first two laid there were called by the same names as my two children, and I felt sympathy and compassion for those two women.

If you want to get into sympathy, put yourself into a man's place. We need Christians whose hearts are full of compassion and sympathy. If we haven't got it, pray that we may have it, so that we may be able to reach those men and women that need kindly words and kindly actions far more than sermons. The mistake is, that we have been preaching too much, and sympathizing too little. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of deeds and not of words.