

BIOGRAPHY: OSWALD CHAMBERS

(1874 – 1917)

Saturday, November 15

Philippians 1:20 *I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body...*

‘My Utmost for His Highest’ has been one of the most popular and respected books for almost a century. The words of Oswald Chambers in this daily devotional have inspired and challenged Christians to live for the Lord. The interesting fact is that Chambers did not write any of it!

Oswald Chambers was born in Aberdeen, Scotland on July 24, 1874. His father was a Baptist preacher and Oswald gave his heart to the Lord as a teenager. He was a gifted artist and studied art and music. He also had a special interest in philosophy and psychology and would teach these courses at Dunoon Training College in Scotland. Chambers called this time his “four years of hell on earth” as he struggled with his own sinfulness and “the powerlessness of his faith.” But in November of 1901, Chambers had a deep experience with the Lord that ended his struggle as he surrendered to the Holy Spirit. He would later say of this moment, “Glory to God, the last aching abyss of the human heart is filled to overflowing with the love of God.”¹

Over the course of the next 14 years, Chambers served with the League of Prayer as a traveling Bible speaker in England, America, and Japan. In 1908, on a trip to America, he got to know Gertrude Hobbs. She was traveling on the same ship as Oswald and he was asked by her mother to look after her. Gertrude had studied to be an executive secretary with hopes of serving England’s prime minister. She was an excellent stenographer who could take shorthand notes at 250 words a minute. The two fell in love and would marry in May of 1910.²

With the start of World War I, Chambers felt God calling him to become a chaplain. In 1915, he and Gertrude moved to Egypt with their 2 ½ year old daughter Kathleen to minister to the troops. A few years later, Oswald Chambers died of complications after an appendix operation.

Throughout their 7-year marriage, Gertrude (Biddy) Chambers had faithfully taken shorthand notes of her husband’s lectures and messages. Once back in England, she began to transcribe these notes and send them to friends and family. In 1927, she gathered some of them into the book ‘My Utmost for His Highest.’ Through the years, 30 other books were published. While Oswald Chambers spoke every word, they were written down and published by his wife and later his daughter.

The life of Oswald and Gertrude Chambers teaches us the importance of prayer and devotion to the Lord. The Lord can use all we are for His glory. Chamber’s focus was on the deeper spiritual life and prayer. He said, “The point of prayer is not to get answers from God, but to have perfect and complete oneness with Him.”³

1 <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/innertravelers/oswald-chambers.html>

2 Warren W. Wiersbe. 50 People Every Christian Should Know, p. 321

3 quoted at <https://prayer-coach.com/prayer-quotes-oswald-chambers/>