

WILLIAM BORDEN (1887-1913)

No Reserves. No Retreats. No Regrets.



William Borden also known as “Borden of Yale” is an example of a wonderful life lived for Christ. He was only 25 years when he died, yet his life was one of great impact.

CHILDHOOD DAYS

William Borden was born in Chicago, USA in 1887. Borden had the blessing of growing up in a godly home, where Bible reading and family prayer were staples. As a 7-year-old, he heard R.A.Torrey give a challenge to dedicate one’s life to serve God. At the invitation, Borden quietly rose and went forward. It was a consecration from which he never drew back.

Upon his high school graduation, his parents rewarded the 16-year old Borden with a trip around the world. As he travelled for almost a year, through Asia, the Middle East and Europe, he felt a growing burden for the masses of unsaved people. Initially he wrote home saying “I think God is calling me to be a missionary”. Later towards the end of the trip, he wrote home to say: “I know God is calling me to be a missionary”. One friend expressed in amazement that he was “throwing his life away by choosing to be a missionary”. In response, Borden wrote 2 words in his Bible: “**No Reserves**”.

CAMPUS MINISTRY

After schooling, Borden enrolled in Yale for his graduate studies in 1905. Very quickly, Borden’s friends noticed something unusual about him and it wasn’t that he was very wealthy. One of them wrote: “He came to college far ahead, spiritually, than any of us. He had already given his heart in full surrender to Christ and had already done it. We who were his classmates learned to lean on him and find in him strength that was solid as a rock, just because of this settled purpose and consecration.”

During his college years, he made an entry in his personal journal that defined what his classmates were already seeing in him. It simply said: “*Say ‘no’ to self and ‘yes’ to Jesus every time.*”

During his first semester at Yale, he found that his passion for Christ was largely unshared by his peers. So, Borden began meeting with a friend in the mornings to read the Bible and pray together, and soon another joined, then another. The number of students showing up for prayer began to multiply. Soon the little group rejoiced to see several of their companions being soundly saved. During the next few years, what began as a small group became a campus wide movement. By the end of the first year, 150 students gathered in groups for prayer. By Borden’s senior year, 1000 of Yale’s 1300 students were meeting in such groups.

Borden made it his habit to seek out the most “incorrigible” students and try to bring them to salvation. It was in chasing down the “incorrigible” that Borden became aware of another mission field, New Haven, a seaport midway

New York and Boston that was rampant with all kinds of vices. He rescued the drunkards and the tramps from the streets of New Haven. He was often found near the docks feeding a poor person and sharing the good news of Jesus. To rehabilitate them, he founded the Yale Hope Mission. With his family fortune, he funded the buildings and other needs of the mission. Over time, the mission at New Haven changed hundreds of lives.

CALL AND COMMITMENT

During his first year at Yale, Borden and few of his friends attended the student Volunteer Movement conference in Nashville, Tennessee. Dr. Samuel Zwemer voiced his appeal for the huge unreached Muslim population in China. "Of course, it will cost life", concluded Zwemer. Borden returned to Yale committed in his heart to that great enterprise, to build where none had yet laid a foundation - the Muslims of China.

Borden's father passed away during his years at Yale, leaving him the huge family fortune. Upon graduation he had several prestigious job offers, but his mind was set on China. In his Bible, he wrote 2 words: "**No Retreats.**"

He obtained a master's degree from Princeton Seminary in New Jersey. Borden followed through with his plan to sail overseas in obedience to God's call on December 17, 1912. Before going to China, he spent time in Egypt learning the Arabic language in preparation for his ministry to Muslims. While there, he contracted spinal meningitis. Within a month, 25-year-old William Borden died on 9th April, 1913 in Cairo, Egypt.

HERO OF OUR FAITH

William Borden is heralded as a great hero of our faith, with a fiery missionary zeal and a heart for the Muslim world. Borden bequeathed \$1 million to China Inland Mission and other Christian agencies.

Professor Charles Erdman summed it up well: "Apart from Christ, there is no explanation for such a life."

"Borden not only gave his wealth, but himself, in a way so joyous and natural that it seemed a privilege rather than a sacrifice", wrote Mary Taylor in her introduction to his biography. Was Borden's untimely death a waste? Not in God's perspective. Shortly before his death, he had written 2 more words in his Bible. "**No Regrets**".