

THE IMPACT OF AN URBANA DECISION CARD ON ONE LIFE

David Howard was a 20-year old sophomore at Wheaton College when he attended the first Student Missionary Conference held in Toronto, Canada in December, 1946. He attended with Jim Elliot, his best friend from college.

David remembers his first conference: “I remember that I was overwhelmingly impressed with two things: First, that every Christian who has received the gospel is responsible for giving it to those people who don’t have it. And second, that most of the people without the gospel were not in my country. People in North America had access to the gospel. But most who had not heard were located somewhere else. This raised the pressing question: What should I be doing about that reality?”

“J. Christy Wilson, was the director of that first conference, became a noted missionary in Afghanistan, then missions professor at Gordon-Conwell Seminary. L. E. Maxwell, president of Prairie Bible Institute, was an impressive speaker, as was Bahkt Singh, a noted India evangelist and church leader. Dr. Robert McQuilkin, president of Columbia Bible College, gave the closing address. I remember being impressed with his passion for the church and for the world.

“Even though I don’t remember the details of when I signed the Decision Card, I took the signed card back to campus with me and tacked it above my desk back in my dorm room. I was willing to respond to whatever the Lord would reveal to me...

“I prayed every day that I might be faithful to God in fulfilling the commitment I had made to him represented by that card....

David joined InterVarsity as a student worker part-time in 1951, and then went with Latin America Mission in 1953 to Costa Rica and Columbia, where he and Phyllis served for 15 years. In the 1960s he returned to the US and began speaking again at InterVarsity chapters across the country. He would often pull the card from his pocket to illustrate the importance of making a decision and prayerfully waiting on the Lord for specific guidance as to when and where.

David continued: “The card is now brown, but I remember I prayed about that daily for years. I found the card many years later, tucked away in some old files. I began to carry it with me when I spoke at the *Perspectives* course. When I taught the History lesson, I would share about how God has used young students in modern missions. I would pull my own Decision Card from my pocket and show it to the students as a tool the Lord used: ‘I made a commitment in 1946, and here is my commitment card....’

“I finally laminated it just this last year... to protect it....

“At this last Urbana’ 12 I was asked frequently to see the card.... In fact, Alec Hill, current president of IVCF, now has a copy framed outside his office in Madison, WI, as an illustration of how God uses our decisions to change our lives and use them for his glory...

“This is an illustration of a very minor thing—a card smaller than a postcard—that God can use as a reminder and benchmark to us along our journey into missions. The decision behind the card affected my whole life, which has been spent in missions. I attribute that to my own prayers that I might be obedient to him. The card meant nothing. It was the decision behind the card.” 



STEVE HOKE

Steve became a life-long worshipper while growing up as a missionary kid in Tokyo, Japan. He now serves in leader development and as a strategic life coach with Church Resource Ministries (CRM), helping mobilize, train and encourage mission teams for global ministry. He is co-author with Bill Taylor of the *Global Mission Handbook: Your Guide to Crosscultural Service* (IVPress, 2009). You may contact Steve at: steve.hoke@crmleaders.org