



## The Story of Corrie Ten Boom and the Hiding Place

In 1837 Willem ten Boom opened a watch shop in his house located in the town of Haarlem in the country of Holland. His family lived in the rooms above the shop. The Ten Boom family were devoted Christians who dedicated their lives in service to their fellow man. Their home was always an "open house" for anyone in need. Through the decades the Ten Booms were very active in social work in Haarlem, and their faith inspired them to serve the religious community and society at large.

During the Second World War, the Ten Boom home became a refuge, a hiding place, for fugitives and those hunted by the Nazis. By protecting these people, Casper and his daughters, Corrie and Betsie, risked their lives. This non-violent resistance against the Nazi-oppressors was the Ten Booms' way of living out their Christian faith. This faith led them to hide Jews, students who refused to cooperate with the Nazis, and members of the Dutch underground resistance movement.

During 1943 and into 1944, there were usually 6-7 people illegally living in this home: 4 Jews and 2 or 3 members of the Dutch underground. Additional refugees would stay with the Ten Booms for a few hours or a few days until another "safe house" could be located for them. Corrie became a ringleader within the network of the Haarlem underground. Corrie and "the Beje group" would search for courageous Dutch families who would take in refugees, and much of Corrie's time was spent caring for these people once they were in hiding. Through these activities, the Ten Boom family and their many friends saved the lives of an estimated 800 Jews, and protected many Dutch underground workers.

On February 28, 1944, this family was betrayed and the Gestapo (the Nazi secret police) raided their home. The Gestapo set a trap and waited

throughout the day, seizing everyone who came to the house. By evening about 30 people had been taken into custody! Casper, Corrie and Betsie were all arrested. Corrie's brother Willem, sister Nollie, and nephew Peter were at the house that day, and were also taken to prison.

Although the Gestapo systematically searched the house, they could not find what they sought most. They suspected Jews were in the house, but the Jews were safely hidden behind a false wall in Corrie's bedroom. In this "hiding place" were two Jewish men, two Jewish women and two members of the Dutch underground. Although the house remained under guard, the Resistance was able to liberate the refugees 47 hours later. The six people had managed to stay quiet in their cramped, dark hiding place for all that time, even though they had no water and very little food. The four Jews were taken to new "safe houses," and three survived the war. One of the underground workers was killed during the war years, but the other survived.

Because underground materials and extra ration cards were found in their home, the Ten Boom family was imprisoned. Casper (84 years old) died after only 10 days in Scheveningen Prison. When Casper was asked if he knew he could die for helping Jews, he replied, "It would be an honor to give my life for God's ancient people." Corrie and Betsie spent 10 months in three different prisons, the last was the infamous Ravensbruck Concentration Camp located near Berlin, Germany. Life in the camp was almost unbearable, but Corrie and Betsie spent their time sharing Jesus' love with their fellow prisoners. Many women became Christians in that terrible place because of Corrie and Betsie's witness to them. Betsie (59) died in Ravensbruck, but Corrie survived. Corrie's nephew, Christiaan (24), had been sent to Bergen Belsen for his work in the underground, and never returned. Corrie's brother, Willem (60), was also a ring leader in the Dutch underground. While in prison for this "crime," he contracted spinal tuberculosis and died shortly after the war.

Four Ten Booms gave their lives for this family's commitment, but Corrie came home from the death camp. She realized her life was a gift from God, and she needed to share what she and Betsie had learned in Ravensbruck: "There is no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still"

and "God will give us the love to be able to forgive our enemies." At age 53, Corrie began a world-wide ministry which took her into more than 60 countries in the next 33 years! She testified to God's love and encouraged all she met with the message that "Jesus is Victor."

Corrie received many tributes. Corrie was knighted by the Queen of Holland. In 1968, the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem (Yad Vashem) asked Corrie to plant a tree in the Garden of Righteousness, in honor of the many Jewish lives her family saved. Corrie's tree stands there today. In the early 1970's Corrie's book THE HIDING PLACE became a best seller and World Wide Pictures released the major motion picture "The Hiding Place." Corrie went on to write many other inspiring books and make several evangelical videos.

Corrie was a woman who was faithful to God. She died on her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday, April 15, 1983. It is interesting that Corrie's passing occurred on her birthday. In the Jewish tradition, it is only very blessed people who are allowed the special privilege of dying on their birthday!

Corrie's story is recounted in her books THE HIDING PLACE and TRAMP FOR THE LORD.



*The Ten Boom family home is located at Barteljorisstraat 19, Haarlem, Holland. In 1987 the Corrie ten Boom House Foundation purchased the building. To continue this family's witness, in 1988 the Foundation opened this home as a museum. It is often called the Hiding Place. It has become a symbol that surpasses national boundaries. You can visit it today!*



## Corrie Ten Boom Story of Forgiveness

"It was in a church in Munich that I saw him—a balding, heavysset man in a gray overcoat, a brown felt hat clutched between his hands. People were filing out of the basement room where I had just spoken, moving along the rows of wooden chairs to the door at the rear. It was 1947 and I had come from Holland to defeated Germany with the message that God forgives.

"It was the truth they needed most to hear in that bitter, bombed-out land, and I gave them my favorite mental picture. Maybe because the sea is never far from a Hollander's mind, I liked to think that that's where forgiven sins were thrown. 'When we confess our sins,' I said, 'God casts them into the deepest ocean, gone forever. ...'

"The solemn faces stared back at me, not quite daring to believe. There were never questions after a talk in Germany in 1947. People stood up in silence, in silence collected their wraps, in silence left the room.

"And that's when I saw him, working his way forward against the others. One moment I saw the overcoat and the brown hat; the next, a blue uniform and a visored cap with its skull and crossbones. It came back with a rush: the huge room with its harsh overhead lights; the pathetic pile of dresses and shoes in the center of the floor; the shame of walking naked past this man. I could see my sister's frail form ahead of me, ribs sharp beneath the parchment skin. *Betsie, how thin you were!*

*[Betsie and I had been arrested for concealing Jews in our home during the Nazi occupation of Holland; this man had been a guard at Ravensbruck concentration camp where we were sent.]*

"Now he was in front of me, hand thrust out: 'A fine message, Fräulein! How good it is to know that, as you say, all our sins are at the bottom of the sea!'

“And I, who had spoken so glibly of forgiveness, fumbled in my pocketbook rather than take that hand. He would not remember me, of course—how could he remember one prisoner among those thousands of women?

“But I remembered him and the leather crop swinging from his belt. I was face-to-face with one of my captors and my blood seemed to freeze.

“ ‘You mentioned Ravensbruck in your talk,’ he was saying, ‘I was a guard there.’ No, he did not remember me.

“ ‘But since that time,’ he went on, ‘I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. Fräulein,’ again the hand came out— ‘will you forgive me?’

“And I stood there—I whose sins had again and again to be forgiven—and could not forgive. Betsie had died in that place—could he erase her slow terrible death simply for the asking?

“It could not have been many seconds that he stood there—hand held out—but to me it seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do.

“For I had to do it—I knew that. The message that God forgives has a prior condition: that we forgive those who have injured us. ‘If you do not forgive men their trespasses,’ Jesus says, ‘neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.’

“I knew it not only as a commandment of God, but as a daily experience. Since the end of the war I had had a home in Holland for victims of Nazi brutality. Those who were able to forgive their former enemies were able also to return to the outside world and rebuild their lives, no matter what the physical scars. Those who nursed their bitterness remained invalids. It was as simple and as horrible as that.

“And still I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart. But forgiveness is not an emotion—I knew that too. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. ‘... Help!’ I prayed silently. ‘I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling.’

“And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.

“ ‘I forgive you, brother!’ I cried. ‘With all my heart!’

“For a long moment we grasped each other’s hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God’s love so intensely, as I did then”

*(excerpted from “I’m Still Learning to Forgive” by Corrie ten Boom. Reprinted by permission from Guideposts Magazine. Copyright © 1972 by Guideposts Associates, Inc., Carmel, New York 10512).*