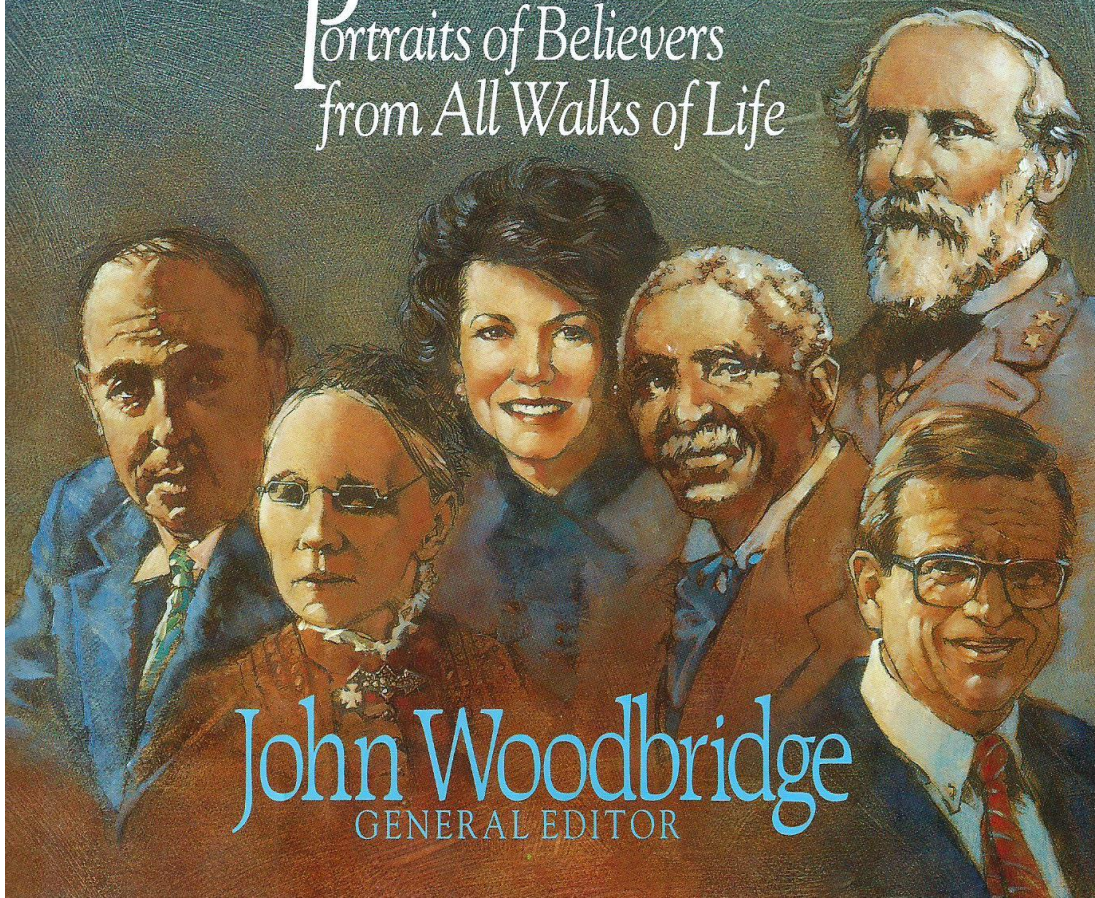


# More Than Conquerors

Portraits of Believers  
from All Walks of Life

John Woodbridge  
GENERAL EDITOR



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### Tried and tested

The story of Corrie ten Boom is familiar to Christians around the world through her best-selling autobiography and film by the same title, *The Hiding Place*.

Corrie was a very ordinary, obscure Dutch woman until the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands during World War II, when her Christian faith was suddenly put to the test. She and her family could either play for safety and ignore the atrocities being carried out against their Jewish neighbors, or they could risk their lives and stand by their convictions. They chose the latter course, and opened their home as a "hiding place" for Jews seeking refuge. It was a choice that, whilst setting them on a path of high adventure, eventually resulted in Corrie and her sister suffering the indescribable terror of a Nazi death camp.

### Unwavering

After she was released, Corrie ten Boom was determined to carry on her family's struggle against the injustice and anti-semitism that had culminated in the Holocaust. She vowed to find some way in which she could make a difference, to insure that she and her family had not suffered in vain. But what could she do—an "old maid" in her midfifties? She was but one of countless thousands who had survived the horrors of Nazism, and she had no special talents or connections. But she had a unwavering faith in God—a faith that had been tried by fire.

**Opposite: Corrie ten Boom.**

### Corrie ten Boom

# Shalom

Corrie ten Boom was one of four children born into a devout Dutch Reformed family that for generations had owned and operated a watch shop in the lower level of the family home in the town of Haarlem, in the Netherlands. Business contacts with Jewish suppliers in Germany had alerted the ten Booms to dangers of Nazism long before World War II broke out. They were deeply troubled by the reports, but what could they possibly do to make a difference?

Willem, Corrie's brother who had studied for the ministry, was the first to act. He joined the Dutch underground, who were involved in the provision of escape routes for Jews and the sabotaging of German war installations. Word quickly spread among Jewish refugees that the ten Boom family—the old man and his two unmarried daughters—could be trusted, and the hidden passages and attic nooks of the three-story house became a sanctuary for hunted Jews.

Corrie's family was not the first generation of ten Booms to demonstrate concern for Jews. In 1844, her grandfather began a prayer meeting for the specific

purpose of praying for Jewish people, and this concern deepened as the decades passed. Amazingly, it was exactly one hundred years later, in 1944, that the ten Boom home was raided by the Gestapo. Corrie and her father and sister were not betrayed by a German spy but by a fellow Dutchman, who had suspected they were Jewish sympathizers. They were arrested, but miraculously, the Jewish fugitives were so well hidden in their home that they eluded the authorities.

### Death camp

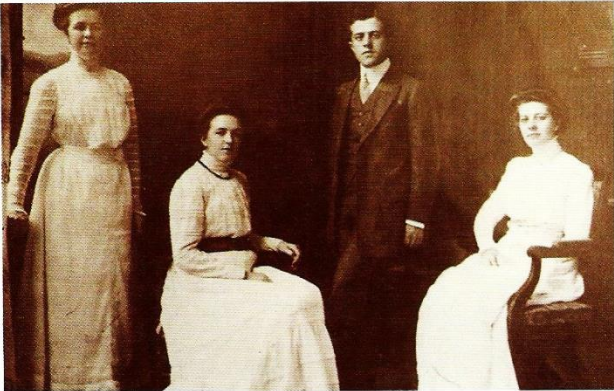
The months that followed that cold February morning were filled with terror. Corrie and her sister Betsy were incarcerated at Ravensbruck—a notorious women's death camp—while their father languished in a prison cell. In May, word was received that he had died.

Conditions at Ravensbruck were appalling—long hours of forced labor, rat-infested unheated barracks, malnutrition, disease, and physical abuse. Yet, during their imprisonment, Corrie and Betsy were able to reach out in love to the ravaged women around them and give

### THE LIFE OF Corrie ten Boom

1892	Born in Haarlem, Netherlands
1944	Raid on watch shop by Gestapo Imprisonment in Ravensbruck death camp
1945	Release from Ravensbruck
1947	Post-war visit to Ravensbruck
1971	Publication of <i>The Hiding Place</i>
1976	Final visit to the Netherlands
1977	Retirement in California to "Shalom House"
1983	Dies in California





The ten Boom family: (left to right) Nollie, Corrie, Willem, Betsy.

them encouragement to put their trust in God. At night they would huddle together and read the Bible and pray that they

Corrie on her travels.



would be released. And Betsy was released, but only through death. She died on Christmas Day, 1944. Corrie was released soon afterwards—through a “clerical error” that was no less than a miracle; the rest of the women in her age group were exterminated a week later.

The suffering the ten Boom family endured was not in vain. As she traveled to sixty-four countries during her thirty-three years of public ministry, Corrie’s story inspired millions of people. Her focus, however, was not on herself or on her family, but on God’s mercy and love. Through all the pain and misery, God was ever faithful. She often told how Betsy had been desperately ill in prison, and how she had only a tiny bottle of medicine. Others needed it as much as Betsy, but Corrie did not want to share, fearing it would run out before her dear sister recovered. But Betsy insisted it be shared, and every day there were enough drops for those in need—with no way of seeing how much was left in the dark glass bottle. Finally,



In Corrie’s bedroom, top left, the hiding place can be seen; downstairs the parlor with the family Bible on the table and the clock showroom and workshop.

Cutaway illustration of the Ten Boom House in Haarlem, The Netherlands. The house is today open to the public as a museum.



**Opposite: Corrie ten Boom in solitary confinement.**

through the help of a sympathetic guard, Corrie acquired more medicine. She was determined to first finish what was left in the bottle, but to her amazement it was empty. There was not one drop left. God had been faithful, not in giving a month's supply, but in meeting the daily need.

#### **The most difficult moment**

One of Corrie ten Boom's most difficult experiences was her visit back to Ravensbruck in 1947. She had come back to Germany to share the gospel with the German people—to let them know that God loved them and that his forgiveness extended to everyone, even to those who had actively participated in the terrible extermination of the Jews. She was sincere as she spoke. Indeed, her heart went out to the German people as she looked out over the audience. She could forgive them even as Christ had forgiven her.

But when the meeting was over, she suddenly discovered that her visit would involve more than forgiving nameless faces. Before her stood one of the most despicable and cruel guards from Ravensbruck; his face had become a terror to her during her months in the death camp. Betsy's painful death flashed before her, and now he was extending his hand, taking her up on her offer of forgiveness. Corrie later reflected on the incident: "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 ever had to do."

Jesus had died on the cross for her sins, and she had been graciously forgiven. Corrie had no other choice, therefore, but to offer that forgiveness to another undeserving sinner.

Corrie died in 1983, on her ninety-first birthday, but she left a living legacy—one that challenges all who follow Christ to be *more than conquerors*.

#### **Further Reading**

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