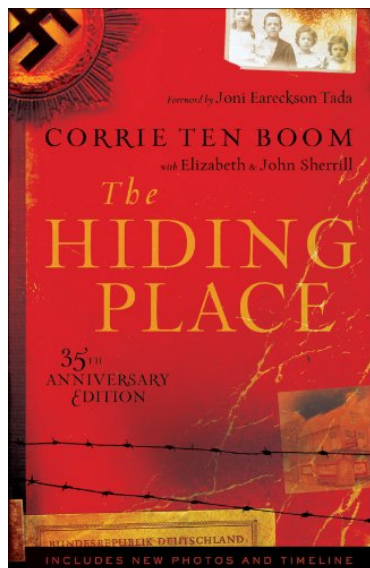


## **The Hiding Place Book Summary, by Corrie ten Boom (archive)**

by Allen Cheng

<https://www.allencheng.com/the-hiding-place-summary-corrie-ten-boom/>



*The Hiding Place* is an autobiographical memoir by Corrie ten Boom, a devoutly religious woman who lived in the Holland city of Haarlem during the Nazi occupation. Compelled by her unshakeable Christian morality, she defied tyranny to rescue her Jewish neighbors who faced annihilation during the Holocaust. She was ultimately caught and sent to the notorious Ravensbruck death camp, where she witnessed scenes of unimaginable cruelty. In the camp, it was Corrie's bedrock faith in the glory of God that sustained her. She discovered that love was a far more powerful force than hate—for God's love was truly unconquerable.

### **1-Page Summary of The Hiding Place**

The ten Boom family, living in the Dutch city of Haarlem, consisted of father Casper, son Willem, and daughters Betsie, Nollie, and Corrie. They were pillars of their community, widely respected and admired by their neighbors and friends. Their Christian faith sustained Corrie ten Boom and her family through the horror of the Nazi occupation from 1940-1945. This faith would be her salvation—as well as the

salvation of all those whom she rescued from persecution and almost certain death, as **their home would become both a spiritual and a literal hiding place.**

## **A Religious Family**

Cornelia “Corrie” ten Boom, born in 1892, grew up as part of a tight-knit, devoutly Christian family that held regular Bible study sessions and taught their children to live according to Christian principles. The family patriarch, Casper ten Boom, was a master watchmaker whose skill was recognized all over Holland and even other countries in Western Europe. His watch shop was on the ground floor of the family’s home, known as the Beje.

Corrie would often accompany Casper on the train to business trips in Amsterdam. During one of these journeys with her father, young Corrie recalled asking him about “sexsin,” a word she had heard in a poem at school. Topics like sex were rarely discussed openly by families in early-20th century Europe—and certainly not in the conservative ten Boom household. After she asked this question, Casper asked Corrie to carry a box full of heavy watches across the train platform. She struggled and told her father that she couldn’t do it. He explained to her that just as there were physical burdens that were too heavy for her to bear,\*\* there were spiritual burdens that she could not carry on her own, so it was best to let God carry them for her. \*\*

Her mother, Cornelia, would take Corrie and her sister Nollie with her on her many visits to the city’s poorest slums to deliver alms to the needy. On one of these alms-giving expeditions, Corrie saw a baby dead of malnutrition. After relating this story to her father, Casper explained to Corrie that death was in God’s hands, and only He could judge when one’s time on Earth was finished\*\*. \*\*He said that when death came for her, God would give her the strength she needed.

Corrie formed a special bond with her maternal aunt, Tante Jans (“tante” being Dutch for “aunt”). Tante Jans was active in charity and religious work, believing that God judged individuals based upon how much they accomplished in life.\*\* **For Tante Jans, her faith-based work \_was\_ her life.**

\*\*Unfortunately, Tante Jans was diagnosed with diabetes in 1914. In January 1919, her condition took a turn for the worse and she knew she would soon die. Before she passed, Tante Jans told Corrie that we all went to God empty-handed, for **our deeds on Earth were nothing compared to Christ’s sacrifices on the cross.**

As a teenager, Corrie had a failed courtship with a young man named Karel, a university classmate of her older brother, Willem. Distraught after the end of this relationship, Corrie came to Casper for comfort. Casper explained that **Corrie should never seek to block out her love for Karel, but instead, look to God to show her a \_new \_way for that love to express itself.** Little did Corrie know just how much love she truly had to share with the world.

## **The Terror Begins**

Corrie’s mother, Cornelia, died in 1921, a few years after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage. In the years that followed, Corrie settled into life at the Beje as a dedicated spinster aunt with her sister Betsie (also a spinster) and Casper. She became the bookkeeper for her father’s watch shop, while Betsie poured herself

into refurbishing the Beje. Betsie made the Beje truly glow, while opening its doors to anyone in Haarlem who wished to stop in for a hot cup of coffee, homemade soup, or Christian prayer and fellowship.

One afternoon in 1937, when Corrie was 45 years old, the ten Booms held a party to celebrate the 100th anniversary of their family watch shop, started by Corrie's grandfather, Willem, in 1837. In the hardships that were soon to befall her, \*\*Corrie would recall this day of celebration as one of the best and proudest of her life. \*\*The entire Haarlem community showed up to toast the ten Boom family, including fellow congregants at their church, St. Bavo's, as well as business associates, suppliers, customers, and even competitors.

At the party, guests talked about Adolf Hitler, the growing threat of Nazi Germany, and their fears of another European general war. Willem, a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, was taking in Jewish refugees from Germany. One of these refugees, a man named Gutlieber, was at the party. Willem told the guests that Gutlieber was forced to flee Munich after a violent assault at the hands of Hitler Youth members, during which they attempted to set his beard on fire.

**On May 10, 1940, Nazi Germany invaded the Netherlands, making the country's worst fears of war and occupation a reality.** It was still a stunning turn of events—not least for the pious ten Boom family. Disturbing changes began to present themselves. German uniforms and insignia became a common feature of ordinary life on the streets of Haarlem, while racist and antisemitic propaganda began to be published in once-respectable newspapers, now under the control of the Reich Ministry of Propaganda.

The Germans also ordered that all privately owned radios be handed over, in an effort to prevent the occupied Dutch population from hearing Allied broadcasts via the BBC. The ten Boom family chose to defy the confiscation order. Accordingly, when the German requisition officer visited the Beje to ask if the family had a radio or other contraband materials, Corrie lied and told him that they didn't. **This was one of the first moral conflicts of the war she faced. Corrie knew that lying was a sin, expressly forbidden by the Ten Commandments.** But she also knew that the confiscation order was unjust and that she would be compromising \_another \_part of her and her family's moral code to comply with it.

## Defying Tyranny

The Jewish community of Haarlem began to face harsh discrimination and was soon ordered to wear yellow stars stitched to their clothing. By 1941, Jews began simply disappearing off the streets. Awful rumors began to circulate about Jews being deported *en masse* to death camps in Eastern Europe.

**Corrie's first act to rescue Jews in Haarlem was helping her neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Weil.** In November 1941, the Germans surrounded and vandalized the Weils' furrier shop, located next to Casper's watch shop. The ten Boom family watched as the Germans looted and destroyed the shop, thankfully while its occupants were absent. Corrie and the family made the pivotal decision to intervene, spiriting Mr. Weil into the Beje and sheltering him until the authorities left. Willem and his son, Kik (both of whom were already active in the Dutch Resistance through Willem's efforts to shelter Jews in the nursing home he operated), helped Mr. Weil escape to a permanent safehouse in the countryside, while getting word out to Mrs. Weil not to return home.

Corrie knew that working with the underground would mean lying, defying authority, stealing, forging,

and possibly even violence, all of which was in direct violation of her bedrock Christian faith. Yet that same faith also told her she could not sit idly by while her neighbors were being persecuted. **She prayed for the answer to the question—how should a Christian act when evil is in power?**

She began helping her Jewish neighbors on a regular basis, people whom she had seen for years on the streets of Haarlem, never even knowing that they \_were\_ Jewish. Separately, Corrie's sister Nollie and her husband were also sheltering two Jewish women in their home. One of them was a man she and her sisters knew only as "Bulldog," so named because he was always to be seen walking his beloved bulldogs through the streets of Haarlem. Bulldog, whose real name was Harry de Vries, told Corrie that he had euthanized his pets, fearing that they would be neglected if he was arrested by the Nazis. Corrie made a solemn pledge to God: she would help His people in any way she could.

One night after the curfew, Kik introduced Corrie to the local leaders of the Resistance. They were instantly sympathetic with Corrie's effort to rescue Jews and\*\* offered her their resources, knowledge, and contacts to help her expand and solidify her operation\*\*. The organization impressed upon Corrie the need to make sure that her safehouse was truly safe. The place in her home where Jews were hiding needed to be totally undetectable, with everyone at the Beje knowing exactly what to do in the event of a sudden raid by the Gestapo. Crucially, the Beje lacked a secret room—something that needed to be addressed immediately.

## **Refuge at the Beje**

\*\*The Resistance sent an operative to help Corrie build a permanent hiding place at the Beje. \*\*He installed a false brick wall in Corrie's room, behind which was to be the secret room where Jews would be able to hide. Corrie was astonished by the thoroughness and quality of the work. It was perfect, totally undetectable from the outside. There was enough room to stand and walk around in the hiding place, as well as a well-hidden vent that would let air in from the outside. The hiding place was only accessible through a small sliding panel, which was hidden behind bookshelves in front of the false wall. The Beje was now ready to function as a permanent hiding place.

The danger Corrie faced was immense. If caught, she and her whole family risked being thrown into a concentration camp or even being summarily executed by the Nazis. Corrie came to believe that self-sacrifice in the service of rescuing others was the deepest expression of love. **And she was prepared to face death in order to show that love, just as Christ had on the cross.**

Corrie's rescue and hiding operation was growing rapidly by spring 1943. What started out as a small network of friends and family now included 80 co-conspirators. Many of these contacts were people in positions of authority in Haarlem, including a Haarlem police officer. Corrie began to worry that the circle was growing too large and unwieldy.

**In 1943, a Jewish man named Meyer Mossel, a former synagogue cantor in Amsterdam, came to live as a permanent resident at the Beje.** He delighted everyone with his humor and cheerfulness, despite the obviously fraught circumstances. He struck a particular chord with Casper, with whom he shared an abiding love for the Judeo-Christian religious tradition. Eventually, the Beje hiding place became home to six Jews who lived there on a permanent basis, along with Corrie, Betsie, and Casper. **The six Jews and the ten Booms became a true family unit.** They ate, laughed, sang, and prayed

together, retaining their humanity in the face of nearly unimaginable fear.

Despite the cohesiveness, circumstances were fraught—the group had to hold regular drills to practice escaping to the hiding place from anywhere in the house at a minute’s notice without leaving behind any trace. These drills always provoked severe anxiety, because they brought home the awful reality of what would happen if they were caught. Corrie, meanwhile, prepared herself for being questioned by the Gestapo—**she needed to master the sin of lying by being able to tell the Gestapo that there were no Jews hiding at the Beje.**

## **In Prison**

On the morning of February 28, 1944, the Beje was raided by the authorities after one of Corrie’s operatives was caught by the Gestapo. **Both Corrie and Betsie were savagely beaten during the home interrogation, as the Gestapo attempted to force a confession.**

Although Corrie gave no information and the officers failed to find the Jewish fugitives in the hiding place, the ten Boom family—Corrie, Betsie, and Casper, in addition to Willem, Nollie, and Peter (Corrie’s nephew), all of whom were present at the Beje that morning for a meeting of their prayer group—was loaded into a van and taken to the federal prison at Scheveningen.

The authorities offered to release Casper and allow him to return home to the Beje. But Casper refused this offer of mercy, telling the Germans that he would never close his door to anyone seeking help—if he went home, he would simply continue hiding fugitives. Even the Nazi terror could not rob Casper of his humanity.

**Corrie was separated from her family \*\*and placed into an overcrowded and filthy cell with a group of other inmates. She was sick with the flu when she was arrested and became even sicker under the inhumane conditions. Two weeks after her arrival at Scheveningen, Corrie was taken to the prison hospital, where a kindly nurse managed to smuggle her a package containing two bars of prewar soap; a packet of safety pins; and the four Gospels, in four small, separate booklets. Two nights later, for unknown reasons, Corrie was \*\*placed in solitary confinement.**

She begged for word of her family, especially her father, but no one would share information with her. The Gospels, however, provided Corrie with the spiritual nourishment she so desperately needed. She remembered that Jesus had also suffered loss and defeat, far worse than what she and her group at the Beje had suffered—but He had ultimately triumphed and redeemed all mankind.

In April 1944, Corrie received word that all the members of her family were free—except for Betsie, who was still in Scheveningen. She also learned that **\*\* all six Jews were safe.\*\*** But just a few weeks later, Corrie learned that Casper had died after ten days in prison. Corrie took comfort in knowing that **Casper was now with God and Mama, free from the agony and suffering of the mortal world**, having lived a life committed to serving God and upholding his abiding faith.

In June 1944, Corrie was taken to a small room at the prison, where, to her surprise, she found her family waiting for her. Willem, Flip, Nollie, and even Betsie were there! A sympathetic guard used the loose pretext of the reading of Casper’s last will and testament to briefly reunite Corrie with her family,

claiming that it was Dutch law that the full family had to be present for such an event. This unexpected reunion was a bright spot in Corrie's otherwise dreary sojourn in Scheveningen. **Willem was severely ill with jaundice due to the unsanitary conditions, malnutrition, and lack of medical care during his stay in prison.** Betsie, too, was gaunt and pale from her ordeal. Corrie learned that her nephew, Kik, had been sent to a prison in Germany after being arrested in connection with his work with the Resistance. Before Corrie left her family and was forced to return to her cell, Betsie used the opportunity to present her sister with a new Bible (Corrie having given away the four gospels she received from the nurse)—this Bible was to be Corrie's strength in the ordeals ahead.

## **A New Test of Faith**

In early summer 1944, Corrie was transported to the Vught concentration camp for political prisoners. During the journey from Scheveningen to Vught, she was reunited with Betsie, who was seriously ill from her ordeal in prison.

**When the sisters arrived at Vught, they were shown the torture centers for recalcitrant inmates who failed to obey camp rules.** If they stepped out of line, Corrie and Betsie would be taken to one of these buildings, stuffed into a room the size of a gym locker, have their hands bound above their head, and left to wait in this condition indefinitely.

**Corrie was assigned to a slave labor unit in the Philips factory at the camp, assembling parts for radios for German fighter planes;** Betsie, in her weakened condition, was assigned to duty sewing prison uniforms with the other sickly inmates. The Philips factory was run by a foreman named Moorman, a fellow prisoner who organized\*\* \*\*slowdowns and sabotage efforts among the workers, in an effort to hamper the German war machine.

The conditions of the camp put Corrie's religious beliefs to the test. One day, Corrie learned that a man named Jan Vogels had betrayed the ten Boom family to the Gestapo. She fantasized about killing this man if she ever saw him. But Corrie ultimately saw the error and sin of her vengeful thoughts. She saw that she faced the same judgment before God as Vogels did. Corrie prayed to God to forgive Vogel and herself as well. In forgiving him, she found herself at peace.

Although Corrie and Betsie found community with the women in their barracks, **the sheer brutality of the camp was impossible to ignore.** One day in September, a fellow prisoner in their barracks went into labor with a child and was forced to give birth on the floor; the baby lived a mere four hours. One evening, the women listened as seven hundred prisoners in the neighboring men's camp were shot to death.

That fall, the women were herded onto an overcrowded railcar and sent on a harrowing two-day journey east. When they disembarked, they saw that **they were at Ravensbruck, the notorious women's extermination camp in Germany.** Corrie never forgot the sight of the smokestack from the crematorium as the camp loomed into her view for the first time.

Conditions were even worse than those at Vught. The barracks were flea-infested, with overflowing toilets spilling their vile contents onto the floor. The prisoners were at the psychological breaking-point, with fights and squabbles a common experience in the barracks. Upon arrival, Corrie and Betsie\*\*

**\*\*were forced to strip naked and shower in front of the SS men. Miraculously, Corrie managed to retain her Bible, which was to serve as her spiritual nourishment in Ravensbruck.**

With the arrival of Corrie and Betsie, **the barracks became a spiritual sanctuary for the women living there. Corrie and Betsie led daily prayer sessions**, giving their fellow prisoners the strength they needed to persevere through their ordeal. Corrie described the moving power of these barracks religious services, as women translated the Bible to each other across the Dutch, German, French, Polish, Russian, and Czech languages. The women were of all different Christian denominations, but they shared in the redeeming strength of God's word.

**\*\*Corrie and Betsie began to formulate an idea for a home they would establish after the war, for survivors of Nazism. \*\*It would be a place of healing and love, where the persecuted and terrorized could heal their physical, psychic, and spiritual wounds. Betsie even envisioned transforming former concentration camps like Ravensbruck into places of restoration.**

Betsie was in poor health when she arrived at Ravensbruck—her condition only grew worse in the harsh circumstances of the concentration camp. Shortly before Christmas, she took a turn for the worse. At last, Betsie was removed to the hospital. The next morning, Corrie snuck off to the hospital and made her way to Betsie's window. What Corrie saw was an emaciated, yellowed body. Betsie was dead.

**\*\*But Corrie witnessed a miracle. When Betsie's body was laid down on the pile of corpses, it was transformed. \*\*No longer emaciated and yellow, Betsie was healthy-looking and beautiful again. Corrie believed she was seeing a vision of her sister as she looked in heaven. Betsie, like Casper, had passed through the suffering of the mortal world and ascended to Heaven in a state of beauty and grace.**

## **Corrie's Final Mission**

**Mere days after Betsie's death, Corrie was issued release papers.** Her sentence was finally up. Before she could leave, however, she was forced to spend two awful weeks in the camp hospital to recover from the swelling in her legs caused by edema.

The Nazi nurses in the hospital took little care for their patients, often mocking their tortured cries or yelling at them to shut up and stop complaining. Corrie did what she could to ease the suffering of others, bringing bedpans to the patients who were too weak to make it to the ward's filthy latrine.

Finally, at the end of December, the doctors cleared Corrie for release. She was given back the possessions she'd been arrested with and, on New Years Day 1945, was placed on a train bound for Berlin. Corrie saw the awful devastation of war as she journeyed through bombed-out German cities and rail stations. After a ten-day sojourn in a hospital at the Dutch border town of Groningen, Corrie boarded a food truck headed to Willem's town of Hilversum.

Reunited with her family, she learned that her nephew Kik had disappeared after being apprehended by the Germans in connection with his work with the Dutch Resistance. Years later, they learned that Kik had died at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1944.

Upon her return, Corrie found that she had no more energy for underground work. She sensed that God

had a different calling for her. She began preaching in the streets of Haarlem in early spring 1945, while the city was still under occupation. Corrie delighted in sharing the message of the unconquerable power of Christ's love. **\*\*She was driven to finally bring her and Betsie's vision to life. She wanted to create a home that would bring healing to the wounded and suffering. \*\***

After one of her preaching sessions, a wealthy woman offered her house as the place for Corrie's home for concentration camp survivors. Almost immediately after the liberation of Holland in May 1945, the first wave of what would become hundreds of people scarred by the war began making their way to Corrie's recovery house. It became a place of refuge, where the wounded and weary could heal their psychological wounds and process the experience of their war trauma. Corrie saw it as her mission to tend to all those who were destroyed by the war—including the perpetrators and collaborators.

**She believed that God had given her certain experiences in life, as a concentration camp survivor, to prepare her for her true mission and purpose.** Corrie first traveled to war-torn Germany, the home of her persecutors, to share the message of Christ the redeemer to a traumatized people. Later, Corrie spearheaded the efforts to open a rehabilitation center in Germany—on the site of the former Darmstadt concentration camp.

**Corrie ten Boom went on to travel the world as a renowned public speaker, visiting more than 60 countries in her lifetime.** She went to far-flung and dangerous places, including Russia, China, Cuba, and other Communist-aligned countries. She saw scenes of dire poverty and oppression, just as she witnessed in the concentration camps—but she also saw hope and love. In Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Europe, she shared her personal story and delivered her constant, unchanging message: that Jesus's love was unconquerable.

## **Full Summary of The Hiding Place**

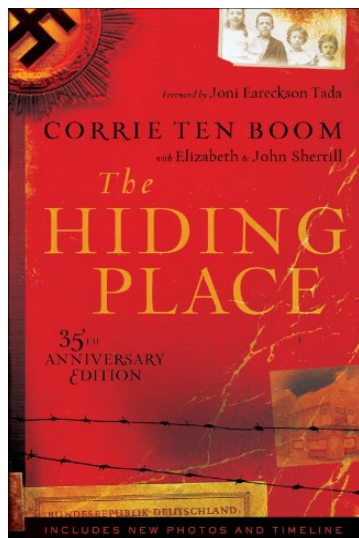
### **Chapter 1: The ten Boom Family**

*The Hiding Place* is Corrie ten Boom's autobiographical account of her experiences rescuing Jews from Nazi persecution during the Holocaust. Her decision to risk her own safety to stand up for what she believed was right derived from her deeply held Christian faith and her unshakeable conviction in the power of love to trump hate.

Corrie grew up in the Netherlands city of Haarlem as part of a long-established, devoutly Christian family deeply committed to their faith. The ten Boom family were pious Christians, regular readers of the Bible who took the tenets of their faith seriously and sang...



### ---End of Preview---



Read the rest of the "The Hiding Place" summary at my new book summary product, [Shortform](#).

Here's what you'll find in the **full The Hiding Place summary**:

- Chapter 1: The ten Boom Family
- Chapter 2: The Evil Comes
- Exercise: Understanding Belief
- Chapter 3: Joining the Resistance
- Chapter 4: A Sanctuary
- Chapter 5: Capture
- Exercise: Exploring Defiance
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