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CORRIE TEN BOOM



The Watchmaker's Daughter

IT WAS NO ACCIDENT that the ten Boom family hid Jews in their house in Holland during World War II. A deep love for the Word of God and respect for God's chosen people, the Jews, were passed on from great-grandfather Gerrit ten Boom to grandfather Willem ten Boom—then to father Casper ten Boom and his daughter Corrie ten Boom.

Corrie was the fifth child born to Cor and Casper ten Boom in 1892. She was a sickly baby, but soon thrived in the warmth and care of her family. Several widowed and unmarried aunts lived with them at various times in the "Beje" (as they called their tall, narrow house) above Casper's watch repair shop in Haarlem.

Corrie and her older sister Betsey never married but remained at the "Beje" working in the watch shop, teaching Bible clubs, and taking care of their elderly father. The sisters were in their fifties when the storm clouds of World War II became dark and dangerous. Always helping people, the ten Boom family never questioned their duty to God: they must hide their Jewish friends who were being arrested and sent to death camps.

Then they were betrayed. The entire ten Boom family was arrested for aiding Jews—but the Jews hiding in their attic were never found.

Father ten Boom died shortly after his arrest, but Corrie and Betsey were sent to Ravensbruck, a Nazi concentration camp. Of all her family, only Corrie and her brother Willem survived.

When she was finally released, Corrie had a glorious message to tell people: that the light of Jesus could brighten the darkness of any prison, and that God's love and forgiveness were stronger than hate. She took this message to prisons and churches all over the world until her death in 1979.

FAITHFULNESS



Betrayed at the Beje

THE WATCH REPAIR SHOP OF CASPER TEN BOOM and his family was a popular place. It always seemed to be bustling with people—customers, grandchildren, people dropping in for a chat with the ten Boom family (which included several unmarried aunts) who lived upstairs in the narrow house.

Two of the ten Boom sisters never married and continued to live at the Beje (as the house was called) and helped their father with the watch repair business. Everyone in Haarlem knew and respected the ten Boom family, who always did fine watch repair work, never overcharging anyone. They lived by the Word of God and were always ready to give someone a helping hand. In 1943, when the German army rolled into Holland, neighbors and friends often found a comforting word or bit of Scripture to ease their fears about what was going to happen to their little country of Holland.

One day, a neighbor came in and pulled Corrie ten Boom into a back room. “My son Hans at the University wouldn’t sign a paper pledging allegiance to the German army. I’m afraid they’ll arrest him if they find him at our house. Will you let him stay here?”

“Of course!” said Corrie. Helping people was as natural to

the ten Booms as breathing.

At first it was only Hans, but when the Nazis began arresting Jews, the house on the Beje became a hiding place. A small secret room was created behind Corrie's bedroom on the top floor; all the members of the house practiced what they would do if the soldiers came.

One day a strange man came into the watch shop and asked for Corrie. He looked worried. "My wife has been arrested for helping to hide Jews," he said anxiously. "I have found a policeman who will help get her released if we give him six hundred guilders. Will you help me?"

"Of course!" said Corrie. She sent urgent word to all her friends who were helping to protect the Jews. Could they collect six hundred guilders as ransom to free this man's wife? When the man returned a few hours later, Corrie handed him the money. "God bless you!" she said.

The next thing she knew, Nazi soldiers were banging at the door. The man had been a spy! The six hundred guilders were proof that the ten Booms were helping Jews. Father quickly gave the signal, and their Jewish friends scurried into hiding. As the soldiers burst in, they arrested Corrie and her family and searched the house for any Jews. But they didn't find any.

Later that day at the police station, the ten Booms read Scripture and prayed together. Yes, they were worried. What would happen to them? But one thing caused their hearts to be glad: their Jewish friends had not been found! Not for one moment were they sorry they had helped people, even though they knew they were taking a great risk.

Many weeks later when Corrie was in prison, separated from her family, a note was smuggled to her: "All the watches in your closet are safe." Corrie knew what it meant. All the Jews hidden at the Beje had escaped!



*Faithfulness is responding in God's way
to everything that happens, little or big.*

FROM GOD'S WORD:

Whoever is faithful in small matters will be faithful in large ones (Luke 16:10a, TEV).

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT:

1. What were some of the "small ways" Corrie was faithful to God?
2. How did those small ways prepare her to be faithful in bigger things, like hiding the Jews, even though it was very risky?
3. What are some ways you can be God's faithful servant today, even in the little things?

THANKFULNESS



“Thank You, God, for the Fleas”

CORRIE TEN BOOM AND HER SISTER BETSIE were roughly pushed into Barracks 28 at Ravensbruck, a “work camp” for prisoners. The two women stared at the stacks of wooden sleeping platforms crowded into the large room. Only a narrow walkway cut between. The platforms were three deep and covered with dirty, stinking straw. There wasn’t even enough room to sit up.

They had just arrived by train along with hundreds of other prisoners, crushed together for three days with eighty women in a freight car. Exhausted, the sisters crawled onto the platform that had been assigned to them. But within moments Corrie sat up quickly and banged her head on the platform above. “Fleas!” she cried, jumping down to the floor. “The place is crawling with fleas! I—I don’t know how I can cope with living in such a terrible place!”

“Corrie, I think God has already given us the answer,” Betsie said. “What was that verse we read from the Bible this morning?”

Corrie pulled out the Bible from the bag that she wore on a string around her neck. In the dim light she read from First Thessalonians: “Be joyful always; pray continually. Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus’ (5:16-18, NIV). Oh, Betsie,

that's too hard in a place like this."

"No, come on, Corrie—let's try. What are we thankful for?"

"Well . . . if we must be in this awful place, I'm thankful that we're together," said Corrie.

"And that the guards didn't find the Bible you had hanging down your back!" added Betsie.

Corrie nodded gratefully. "Maybe we should thank God for how crowded we are in here, because that way more women will hear the Word of God when we read it aloud!"

"That's right!" Betsie's eyes danced. "And thank You, God, for the fleas—"

"No, Betsie!" Corrie cried. "I can't thank God for the fleas. There's nothing good about them."

"Well, we'll just have to wait and see," answered Betsie.

Every day the prisoners were awakened at 4:30 a.m. and forced to stand outside in the cold for roll call. Then they worked an eleven-hour day. They were given black bread for breakfast and a thin soup of turnips for supper. The only thing they had to look forward to was when all the women stumbled back to the barracks at night. Before they went to sleep, Betsie and Corrie would open their smuggled Bible and read God's Word to the other women.

At first they posted lookouts to keep a watch for the guards. Anyone caught with a Bible would certainly be killed. But day after day passed, and no guards came into Barracks 28. Gradually they read the Bible twice a day, and more and more women listened. No one bothered them.

One day Betsie grabbed Corrie's arm and whispered, "I know why no one has bothered our Bible studies. I overheard some of the guards talking. None of them wants to come into Barracks 28 *because of the fleas!*"

Corrie wanted to laugh. "All right, Lord," she said. "Thank You for the fleas!"



Thankfulness helps us look for the ways God can use everything—even bad things—for good.

FROM GOD'S WORD:

Give thanks whatever happens. That is what God wants for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT:

1. Why was it important for Corrie and Betsie to look for things they could be thankful for?
2. How did God use the pesky fleas to help them?
3. Is there something unpleasant that you could thank Jesus for today? Try it and see what happens!

FORGIVENESS



“No Fishing Allowed”

CORRIE TEN BOOM LOOKED OUT over the crowded church in Munich, Germany. The people’s faces were pale and sad. World War II was over, but as the raw facts about the Nazi death camps and their plan to kill all the Jews became widely known, the German people seemed shocked into silence.

Corrie could almost hear her sister Betsey whispering in her ear, “Talk to them, Corrie! They need to hear about God’s love and forgiveness. They need to know that the light of Christ is stronger than all the powers of darkness.”

That’s exactly what Corrie was doing. After being released from Ravensbruck, the Nazi death camp for women, she was traveling all over Holland and Germany, telling people that guilt and bitterness would keep them “prisoners” even though the war was over. Only God’s love and forgiveness could set them free.

Now her travels had brought her to this large, Munich church. After telling them a little bit about her experiences during the war she said, “Even though our bodies were prisoners in Ravensbruck, our spirits were free. When we confess our sins, God casts them into the deepest ocean.” The spry, graying woman grinned. “And even

though I cannot find a Scripture for it, I believe God places a sign out there that says, NO FISHING ALLOWED."

Did the people hear the good news? Corrie wasn't sure. When the service was over, they got up quietly and filed out. No one asked her any questions, no one stopped to talk to her . . . except one man wearing a gray overcoat with a brown felt hat in his hands.

Corrie froze when she saw him. She recognized that face. A few years ago, he had been wearing a blue uniform and carrying a short whip, a cruel sneer on his lips. *He had been a Nazi guard at Ravensbruck!*

The man stuck out his hand. "Thank you for that message, Miss ten Boom," he said. "It's good to know that God has buried all my sins at the bottom of the sea."

Corrie was horrified. Did the man expect her to shake his hand? She couldn't! Her dear Betsey was dead—a victim of the cruel treatment she had suffered at the hands of Nazi guards like this one.

"I used to be a guard at Ravensbruck," the man went on. "I did many wrong, cruel things. After the war, I confessed my sins to God, and I know He has forgiven me. But," again the man stuck out his hand, "I would like to know that you forgive me too, Miss ten Boom. Will you forgive me?"

Corrie just stood there. *I can't!* she cried silently. But as the man stood there, waiting, she realized that God had forgiven her sins. Could she do any less for this man?

Oh, Jesus, help me lift my hand! she prayed silently. Slowly, mechanically, she lifted her hand and put it in his. And as she did so, she began to feel joy flooding down from her heart all the way to her fingertips. "I do forgive you, brother," she said. "With all my heart!"



*Forgiveness may be hard, but it is possible,
because God forgives us.*

FROM GOD'S WORD:

“If you forgive others for their sins, your Father in heaven will also forgive your sins. But if you don't forgive others, your Father in heaven will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14-15).

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT:

1. Why did Corrie and her sister Betsey believe that God's love and forgiveness were stronger than the powers of darkness?
2. Why was it so hard for Corrie to forgive her former prison guard?
3. What is the hardest thing you've ever had to forgive? According to Matthew 6:15, what happens—or doesn't happen—if we don't forgive?