Corrie 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 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 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...
In 1918, Cornelia ten Boom, Corrie's mother, suffered a cerebral hemorrhage that put her into a coma. She lay unconscious for two months before she finally came out of it. She managed to survive, but she was a shadow of her former self. She was physically disabled and limited in her movements. Worse, she almost entirely lost her powers of speech. One of the few words she retained, however, was "Corrie." This was how she now referred to all people. But Mama's condition taught Corrie about how truly strong love was. Although her mother could hardly move or speak, Corrie knew that Mama loved her family and her community. Love could not be bottled up or stifled, no matter the circumstances.

Despite her condition, Cornelia survived to see the wedding of her daughter Nollie in 1921. At the wedding, something miraculous happened. Cornelia, who had not spoken coherently in years, suddenly rose to sing the hymn "Fairest Lord Jesus," with the entire assembled family and congregation joining her in rapturous wonder. For Corrie, it was a miracle, albeit a temporary one, a blessing from God on that happy day. Mama passed away a mere four weeks after Nollie's wedding, but no one, least of all Corrie, ever forgot her moment of grace.

Life at the Beje

In the years that followed, Corrie settled into her life as a dedicated spinster aunt. As her siblings got married and started families of their own, she became a caregiver to a growing brood of nieces and nephews, whom she loved as though they were her own children. Although she loved them all, she was especially fond of Peter, one of Nollie's sons. Peter was a musical prodigy who delighted the family, and the community at large, with his magnificent and beautiful piano playing. She also became the bookkeeper for her father's watch shop, helping to bring some order and regularity to Casper's notoriously eccentric business practices. In her life at the Beje, she was joined by her older sister Betsie, who also chose not to marry.

Thus began a tranquil time in Corrie's life, one defined by domestic...

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Shortform Exercise: Understanding Belief

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Corrie's sense of right and wrong was powerfully influenced by her commitment to Christian doctrine. In a few sentences, describe what you think are the main influences behind your moral values.

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The Hiding Place Summary Chapter 3: Joining the Resistance

More disturbing than the rationing, curfews, identity cards, or confiscation of radios, however, were the measures that the German occupiers began to take against the Jews of Haarlem. For years, Corrie's brother Willem had warned his family about the violent antisemitic ideology of Nazi Germany. Now it was happening on Dutch soil.

The Jewish community of Haarlem began to face harsh discrimination. They were barred from entering restaurants, cafes, and parks, to Corrie's horror and dismay. The anti-Jewish measures soon took on a violent character—Jewish cemeteries and synagogues were looted and vandalized, with the perpetrators desecrating holy religious texts and painting swastikas on the walls and doors of Jewish houses of worship. Later, Jews were marked out from the rest of the community by the infamous decree ordering them to wear yellow stars stitched to their clothing.

One of the most shocking aspects of the antisemitic campaign was how eagerly many ordinary Dutch people gleefully participated in it. The Netherlands had its own version of the German Hitler Youth, called the NSB. These were local Nazi sympathizers and collaborators, who espoused a hateful antisemitic ideology that found expression in terrorizing and harassing their Jewish neighbors. Corrie was aghast to discover that people whom she had known and seen in Haarlem in ordinary times were now enthusiastic participants in the gathering storm of hate.

By 1941, Jews began simply disappearing off the streets. There were awful scenes being played out on the streets of Haarlem, as Corrie saw her Jewish neighbors and acquaintances (many of whom she hadn't even known were Jewish) being subjected to
harsh interrogations, raids, and mass arrests. In the watch shop, the disappearances left behind a more subtle, yet sinister trace—repaired watches left on the hooks, never picked up by their owners. As Jews were hauled off the streets, no one could truly guess where the Germans were taking them. Awful rumors began to circulate about Jews being deported en masse to camps in Eastern Europe...

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The Hiding Place Summary Chapter 4: A Sanctuary

The man sent by the Resistance to examine conditions at the Beje introduced himself to Corrie only as "Mr. Smit." False identities were standard operating procedure within the Resistance: knowing too much about one's co-conspirators was dangerous for the entire group. Mr. Smit, Corrie learned after the war, was actually an architect, one of Europe's most famous.

Some aspects of Corrie's operation met with Smit's approval. Corrie had, for example, implemented a warning system to prevent aid workers delivering supplies from entering the Beje if a raid was already underway—a **small triangular sign that in the shop window was the "all clear" signal to enter; its absence was the signal to stay away.** Smit deemed this acceptable, as well as the hiding space for the ration cards beneath the stairs.

**But the lack of a true hiding place for the people at the Beje was a major cause for concern.** When Smit went up to Corrie's room, however, he found that the architecture of the house was ideally suited for constructing a secret hiding place.

Smit 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 Smit's 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.

Mr. Smit proudly declared that the Germans would have great difficulty locating anyone hiding in the space he had built, boasting that the Gestapo could search for a year and never find anything. The Beje was now ready to function as a permanent hiding place.

**A Desperate Situation**

Corrie knew that her activities were dangerous, and that she faced severe punishment—even death—at the hands of the Nazis if caught. She had been forced to lie in service of her work. But Casper reminded her that the lies...

**The Hiding Place Summary Chapter 5: Capture**

In early 1944, **one of Corrie's operatives, a man named Jop, was captured by the Gestapo.** Rolf warned Corrie that this likely signaled the beginning of the end for her rescue operation—the Germans would get information out of Jop one way or the other that was almost certain to result in the arrest and capture of everyone involved. Corrie had been concerned about the growth of her operation for some time and how difficult and complex it had become to maintain it. With a network of dozens of people delivering supplies and information, only one domino needed to fall for the whole operation to collapse.

**February 28, 1944**

On the morning of February 28, 1944, Corrie was in bed, sick with the flu and flushed with fever. As she opened her fluttering eyelids, she thought she saw Eusie and two of the other fugitives scrambling into the hiding place. Dismissing it as a fever dream...
(they hadn't planned a drill for that day), she drifted off back to sleep.

Suddenly, officers burst into Corrie's room, interrogating her exactly as Kik and Rolf had said they would. The practice had paid dividends. When they asked where the Jews were hiding, Corrie feigned ignorance and claimed she had no idea what they were talking about. As the officers brought her downstairs, Corrie witnessed a scene of absolute chaos unfolding at the Beje. Gestapo officers were ransacking the house and the watch shop, tearing them apart as they looked for Jews.

**Corrie and Betsie were savagely beaten during the home interrogation, as the Gestapo attempted to force a confession.** Betsie, characteristically, later said she felt sorry for the officers who had hurt her, that they were so devoid of God's love as to behave this way. All the while, Corrie was terrified for the six Jews hiding behind the false wall in her room—although they had successfully made it to the hiding place, surely it was just a matter of time before they were discovered.

She was also horrified to discover that the Gestapo had extensive knowledge about the workings of her operation and even knew about her warning signal....

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### The Hiding Place Summary Chapter 6: In the Camps

One day early in the summer of 1944, Corrie was abruptly ordered by the guards at Scheveningen to pack out and form a line with the other women to evacuate the prison immediately. **As she saw the prison being emptied, it became clear what was happening—the Allied armies had landed in Europe and were beginning the process of liberating the occupied countries!**

In response, the Germans were moving their political prisoners out of the path of the rapidly advancing Allied forces and deeper into the interior of Europe. Corrie stuffed her few possessions—her sweater, pajamas, toothbrush, and Bible—into a pillowcase and awaited further orders as she was taken to a freight yard on the outskirts of The Hague. She was happy to be getting out of Scheveningen, but she was deeply fearful that something even worse might be in store for her. She was particularly terrified of being transported out of The Netherlands into Germany.

At last, their train arrived. The guards marched and shoved the prisoners onto the train, refusing to tell their human cargo where they were headed or what would happen to them when they arrived. But there was one ray of hope: **Corrie and Betsie were at last reunited. They had endured terrible hardship, but they would no longer be alone.** Betsie was without the Bible that Nollie had given her—she had given it away to others, as she did with all things.

Corrie could only see a tiny bit of the outside world from inside the cramped train. But she saw enough to know that they weren’t being sent to Germany when she saw that the train did not take a turn east at a trestle. They would be staying in Holland, and, for her, this was a source of comfort.

### Arrival at Vught

The train disembarked, but not at a rail station or even a camp. The guards forced them off the train in the middle of the woods. Once the suffering and half-starved prisoners had all cleared off the train, they were ordered to march on foot, at gunpoint. Betsie was ill and was having difficulty breathing, so Corrie helped her make the journey through the dark woods. At...

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**In Book Summary?**
Mere days after Betsie’s death, Corrie was ordered to stand to the side during roll call and report to the administration barracks. When she arrived, the clerk stamped her papers, which bore the words “CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE.” Next, she was handed a rail pass that would take her out of Germany and back into Holland.

Corrie was stunned—her ordeal was really coming to an end! But before she could walk out of the camp, she had to submit to one more humiliating, dehumanizing medical inspection. Much to her dismay, the doctor immediately looked at the swelling in her legs and feet and declared her unfit for release. Apparently, she was suffering from edema. Before she could walk out of Ravensbruck, Corrie would need to report to the camp hospital—the same place where her sister had died.

The Hospital

The hospital was a dreadful place, filled with dying and suffering women, languishing from untreated injuries and illnesses, many of them delirious from the combined effects of fever, malnutrition, and neglect. Some of the women had been on transport trains that had been hit in Allied bombing raids and were suffering from third-degree burns and severed limbs.

The nurses took little care for their patients, often mocking their tortured cries or yelling at them to shut up and stop complaining. On Christmas Eve 1944, Corrie’s first night in the hospital, four women fell from the top bunks onto the floor, where they died from shock. The sounds of pain rang throughout the ward. Corrie did what she could to ease the suffering, bringing bedpans to the patients who were too weak to make it to the ward’s filthy latrine.

One night, Corrie saw that the bedpans she had laid out for the patients were missing. She discovered that two Hungarian gypsies had stolen them, secreting them under their cots to save themselves the trip to the latrine. Corrie pleaded with these women to return them so that everyone could use them, but seemingly to no avail. That night, one of the gypsies threw her bandage at Corrie’s face—a bandage that had been used to cover this woman’s...

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