The Hiding Place

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF CORRIE TEN BOOM

As her memoir describes in detail, Corrie ten Boom was born into a large and religious Dutch family at the turn of the 20th century. After sheltering Jewish fugitives throughout World War II and surviving internment in the Vught and Ravensbruck concentration camps, ten Boom returned to Holland and opened rehabilitation centers both for Holocaust survivors and former Dutch Nazi collaborators. To raise money for these projects, ten Boom began speaking about her experiences to church audiences. She soon became well-known and traveled the world as an evangelical motivational speaker, speaking alongside famous preachers like Billy Graham. She emerged not just as a religious thinker but a social critic, protesting modern issues like the Vietnam War. Corrie wrote many books about her life and her relationship to Christian teachings, among which *The Hiding Place* is the most famous. Ten Boom was honored as one of the Righteous Among the Nations, an honor given by Israel to non-Jews who put themselves at risk to save Jewish lives during the war. In the last years of her life, ten Boom retired to California, where she died on her 91st birthday.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In the midst of crippling economic depression and political discontent following the World War I, the Nazi party – led by Adolf Hitler – rose to power in Germany. The Nazis promised to restore Germany's lost greatness and the privileges which Germans deserved as members of a "superior" race; to accomplish this, they argued, Germans must eliminate "inferior" people like homosexuals, Romani people, Communists, the mentally disabled, and above all Jews. In 1939, Germany sparked World War II. Conquering or occupying almost all of Europe in the war's first years, German forces persecuted Jews and other marginalized groups and deported millions to concentration and death camps built to execute large numbers of people at maximum speed. They were aided in this endeavor by the cooperation of conquered governments, local far-right parties, and ordinary people who profited by appropriating the goods and property of their deported neighbors. By the time the Allied forces won the war in 1945, Germany and its collaborators had murdered eleven million people, six million of them Jews.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

There is a wealth of literature describing and attempting to explain the events of the Holocaust, from the perspective of both survivors and people who helped them. Perhaps the most obviously related to *The Hiding Place* is Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*, which tells the story of a Dutch Jewish family hiding in a house in Amsterdam, much as Corrie sheltered fugitives in her own house. Elie Wiesel wrote a number of books about his time in Auschwitz, most notably *Night*, and later won the Nobel Prize for his work. Other authors have addressed the difficulty and moral implications of remembering the Holocaust. In his graphic novel *Maus*, Art Spiegelman addresses the fact that by focusing on people who survived, Holocaust narratives often inadvertently marginalize the tragedy of those who died. Primo Levi, best known for *If This is a Man*, was one of the first thinkers to address the phenomenon of Holocaust denial and trivialization that has sprung up in the decades since its occurrence.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Hiding Place*
- **When Written:** 1971
- **Where Written:** Holland
- **When Published:** 1971
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Memoir
- **Setting:** Haarlem, Holland
- **Climax:** Corrie's arrest and sentencing to prison
- **Antagonist:** Nazi Germany, intolerance
- **Point of View:** First-person limited

EXTRA CREDIT

Blockbuster. In 1975, *The Hiding Place* was made into a movie starring Julie Harris and Jeannette Clift as Betsie and Corrie ten Boom.

Back to the Bible. *The Hiding Place*'s title derives from a verse in Psalm 119, which says of God, "Thou art my hiding place and my shield."

PLOT SUMMARY

Corrie ten Boom begins her narrative by recalling a party she and her sister Betsie organize in honor of the hundredth anniversary of their Father's watch shop. Corrie helps Betsie make breakfast and do last-minute cleaning. Soon, her sister Nollie arrives with her several children. As the day progresses, the ten Boom house (nicknamed the Beje) fills up with colleagues and family friends, including Pickwick, a wealthy

customer and one of Father's confidantes. All afternoon, Corrie keeps an eye out for her older brother Willem. When he arrives, he brings a Jewish man with him, announcing that he has just fled Germany after being attacked in the street. Willem operates a nursing home for elderly Jews, and lately he's been sheltering many people trying to escape the Nazis. Father and Corrie bring the man coffee and make him feel welcome, while the other guests conclude that Germany, a "civilized" country, will soon put an end to the activities of such "hoodlums."

Corrie then steps back to reminisce on her childhood and adolescence. She grew up in the Beje with her older siblings, Nollie, Betsie, and Willem. Also living in the house are Father and Mama, as well as Mama's sisters: Tante Jans, who writes "flaming Christian tracts," Tante Bep, a former governess, and Tante Anna, who takes care of most of the housework due to Mama's recurring bouts of illness. One morning, Corrie has to go to school for the first time; nervous and shy, she decides that she will simply refuse . However, over breakfast Father reads a long psalm describing God's ability to create a "hiding place" for the faithful. Father then walks Corrie to school himself.

Father often takes Corrie with him on business trips to Amsterdam. He sets his own watch, as well as all the clocks in the shop, by the precise naval clock in the capital. He also visits wholesalers who sell him parts, many of whom are Jews. After business discussions are concluded, the men bring out their **Bibles** and conduct lively discussions.

When Corrie graduates high school, she takes over the work of running the household. In particular, she cares for Tante Jans, who has developed diabetes. The disease makes the normally tough Tante Jans worried and nervous. Every week Corrie performs a complicated blood test on her aunt; one week the results are bad, and she knows that Jans has only a few weeks to live. The family gently delivers the news to the old woman, but she reacts with great calm and tranquility. To Corrie, this is confidence that God always endows people with moral strength at the moment they need it most.

As a teenager, Corrie meets Willem's best friend at university, Karel, and falls in love. Corrie considers herself shy and plain, so she's flattered that Karel notices of her. When Willem is finally ordained as a minister and hired by his first church, family and friends gather to listen to his first sermon. In these weeks of celebration, Corrie and Karel become close, discussing a shared future even though Karel has not yet proposed. One morning, Willem warns Corrie that Karel will never actually marry her; his parents are insistent that he marry a wealthy woman, and he is resigned to fulfill their expectations. Corrie doesn't want to believe what Willem is saying, but after she returns home Karel writes her only sporadically. Months later, he arrives at the Beje bringing a woman he introduces as his fiancée. After they leave, Corrie runs upstairs sobbing. Trying to comfort her, Father says that she should ask God for help resolving the hurt and anger she now feels. Corrie prays that she will be able to love Karel selflessly, as God does.

Soon afterwards, Mama has a stroke. Now she's confined permanently to her bed, and can't speak or write. Still, she manages to correspond with family and friends by having Corrie write letters to them. Meanwhile, Nollie becomes engaged to Flip, another student at the teaching school she currently attends. On their wedding day, Corrie realizes that she will probably never get married or leave home. She recalls her previous hopes of a life with Karel, but finds that she's able to think of him "without the slightest trace of hurt." She knows that Jesus has helped her to forgive Karel and pray for him sincerely. Several weeks after the wedding, Mama dies.

Corrie has been running the house while Betsie acts as bookkeeper at the watch shop, but eventually the sisters switch roles, as Betsie proves a better housekeeper and Corrie has a sincere interest in the business. Learning more of Father's trade, she becomes the first certified female watchmaker in Holland. Between running the shop, visiting her siblings and their children, and caring for the foster children that Father takes in, Corrie has a busy and satisfying life by the time of the shop's hundredth anniversary.

The ten Booms have been hearing about Germany's ominous transformation on the radio, but they only realize how serious the situation is when Otto, a young watchmaking apprentice and avowed Nazi, comes to work at the shop. Otto makes a habit of taunting Christoffels, an elderly employee at the shop, even kicking and hitting him in the street. Willem explains that Nazi philosophy encourages disrespect for the elderly because they are "useless" to society. Trying and failing to remonstrate with the young man, Father eventually fires him.

Soon afterward, Germany declares war against Holland, overcoming its army in five short days. The ten Booms then must adjust to life in an occupied city: Germany soldiers and tanks are everywhere, a curfew is set, groceries are bought with ration coupons, and the newspapers only carry Germany propaganda. More frightening, Allied bombings are often audible at night, sometimes breaking the windows. However, the most sinister aspect of the occupation is the growing persecution of Jews. Many shops stop serving Jews, and eventually they are forced to wear yellow stars on their clothes. Some families are taken away without warning. Corrie is horrified to see that many Dutch people don't object to this injustice or even participate in it, joining the NSB (Dutch Nazi party), taking over the shops and residences of deported Jews.

One afternoon, German soldiers ransack a Jewish shop across from the Beje. Corrie and Betsie quickly bring the owner inside their house. After making contact with his wife, they arrange for him to be transported to Willem's house. Due to his previous connections to the Jewish community, Willem is already sheltering some Dutch Jews. Coming at night to pick up the couple, Willem's son Kik informs Corrie that she's part of

the "underground" now. Corrie knows that a resistance has formed in Holland, but she always associates these movements with sinful things like stealing and lying. She finds it hard to think of herself as part of it.

As the weeks go by, the ten Booms begin to help Jewish neighbors in any way they can. Corrie picks up and delivers watches so Jewish customers don't have to brave the streets; a rabbi stores his books in the Beje; Father befriends a man he and Corrie have seen for years during their evening walks, Harry de Vries. Jews whose houses or shops have been targeted by the Gestapo begin sleeping at the Beje, fearing deportation. Corrie asks Willem to find these people safer and more permanent places in the countryside, but it's hard to place fugitives without ration cards, which are not issued to Jews. Corrie turns to Fred Koornstra, a family acquaintance who works in the Food Office, and they come up with a scheme to manufacture fake ration cards. This makes it possible for Corrie to shelter more people and to provide them with resources when they move on. Kik brings Corrie to a clandestine underground meeting; to her surprise, it's headed by Pickwick, an old family friend. Pickwick sends an architect to the Beje, who builds a secret room in which fugitives can hide, should the Gestapo raid the house.

Every day new problems occur, but with help Corrie always solves them. Pickwick introduces Corrie to a man who sets up a secret telephone in her house, she finds more sources of fake ration cards, and a policeman named Rolf turns out to be sympathetic and provides her with information about Gestapo movements. However, not everything goes well. Once Corrie is struggling to find a hiding place for a mother and a young baby; she asks a pastor and family acquaintance to take them in, but he's too scared and refuses. Corrie has to place the pair in a less secure house, and they are later deported.

Some people also begin to stay permanently at the Beje. The ten Booms take in one man, Meyer, because his features are so stereotypically Semitic that other safe houses consider him too risky. Meyer is very religious and knowledgeable about scriptures, and he and Father become close friends. Corrie also takes in two young men, Henk and Leendert, as well as some Jewish women. They run drills on a regular basis in which the fugitives gather their belongings and hide in the secret room as fast as possible. Corrie's nephews prepare her for possible interrogation by waking her up at night and questioning her. This part is especially hard for Corrie, as she's not used to lying.

One night, an unknown man arrives at the Beje, asking Corrie how he can help his wife, who has been imprisoned for helping Jews. Corrie gives him instructions and some money; she has the flu, and is too sick and tired to think much about it. That night, the Gestapo raid the house. For hours they interrogate Corrie and the other members of the family, but they refuse to admit that Jews are hidden there, and the Germans don't uncover the secret room. In the end, they arrest the entire family, including Peter, Willem, Nollie, and her husband.

The family is taken to a prison in the Hague. Corrie is separated from her sisters and placed in a cell with many other women, where she's sick, worried, and bored. Because of her illness, she's eventually placed in an individual cell where she languishes until her health improves. She spends four months in the cell. Eventually, a letter arrives from Nollie informing her that Father died in a hospital ten days after their arrest.

Corrie is interrogated several times by Lieutenant Rahms, a German army officer. Instead of giving him any information, Corrie speaks to him about the Bible, which seems to strike a chord in the officer. He tells her that he hates the work he does at the prison and only wants to go home to his family. At the same time, he feels that there's no way to change conditions in the prison or alter the circumstances of his job. After some time, Lieutenant Rahms allows the whole family to convene at the prison, on the pretext of reading Father's will. It's the first time Corrie sees her family in months; by now, everyone has been released except her and Betsie. Willem tells her that all the Jews hiding in the Beje managed to escape, though police watched the house for several days.

Some time later, the women in the prison are transported to Vught, a concentration camp in Holland. Corrie is grateful to be reunited with Betsie, even though they are housed in dismal barracks. Corrie is assigned to work in a factory assembling German radios. The atmosphere is congenial, as the prisoner-foreman encourages people to work slowly. In the evenings, Corrie talks with Betsie, who's been assigned to knitting socks. Betsie learns that the spy who exposed them, Jan Vogel, is a collaborator notorious throughout Holland. Corrie feels furious every time she thinks about him, but Betsie says that he must be "suffering dreadfully" and encourages Corrie to pray for him.

As rumors circulate that Germany is losing the war and the Allies are approaching Holland, the female prisoners are transported to Ravensbruck, a concentration camp in Germany. Waiting to be processed, they have to sleep outside in the rain for several days, after which Betsie contracts a chronic cough. Still, Corrie manages to smuggle a sweater for her sister and a small Bible through inspection. She's horrified to find that the barracks are crawling with fleas, and that several women have to share each bed. Still, Betsie reminds her that the Bible instructs people to thank God in "all circumstances." There's a lot of complaining and fighting in the barracks, but Betsie improves the circumstances and creates cohesion by praying and eventually leading prayer services for women of all Christian denominations. Eventually, they realize that the guards haven't discovered their illicit activities because they are too scared of fleas to inspect the barracks. Corrie realizes that even the fleas are part of God's plan.

Betsie gets sicker and has to spend days at a time in the hospital; otherwise, she knits socks with other women too

weak for outdoor labor. Eventually, Corrie joins this group as well, and the women spend the day praying and envisioning their lives after the war. Betsie says that she and Corrie will open a house for people who need to recover from concentration-camp life. However, one day Betsie is too ill to get out of bed for the morning roll call. She's taken to the hospital, and by the time Corrie escapes from work to go see her, she's already died.

One day, Corrie is released for seemingly no reason. She and several other prisoners are dropped at a train station, to make their own way home. Once she reaches Holland, she limps to a hospital where kindly nurses take care of her for several days and then arrange for her transport to Willem's home. Her siblings are overjoyed to see her, though devastated to hear of Betsie's death. In turn, Corrie is shocked to hear that Kik has been deported to Germany, and no one knows where he is.

After some days, Corrie returns to the Beje, which she now inhabits alone. The house feels empty and haunted by the memory of its former occupants. In order to fill her time and give herself a sense of purpose, she turns the house into a school and meeting place for mentally disabled children, who can't go outside due to constant harassment from Nazi soldiers.

Even before the end of the war, Corrie meets a wealthy widow who agrees to let Corrie turn her country house into the recovery center Betsie dreamed of in Ravensbruck. Almost as soon as the Allies take Holland, droves of people start arriving at the house, coming from concentration camps or hiding places within Holland. At the home, they relearn all the tasks of normal life, and try to overcome their resentment of both the Germans and the Dutch collaborators. Corrie always encourages her residents to forgive those who have harmed them, though she knows it's difficult to do so.

As time goes on, Corrie becomes well-known as a public speaker, relating Betsie's teachings about the importance of forgiveness to large audiences. She even starts to speak in Germany. At one church service, she recognizes a former S.S. guard from Ravensbruck. When the man comes up to shake her hand, she remembers all the suffering Betsie experienced there and feels that she's unable to forgive him. Still, as she prays for help, she feels her arm become warm and lift, seemingly of its own accord. She knows that God has assisted her in her own personal task of forgiveness. Eventually, in cooperation with a German relief organization inspired by her work, Corrie helps transform a former concentration camp into a shelter for displaced Germans, the very people who once imprisoned her.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Corrie ten Boom – The novel's protagonist and narrator, a middle-aged Dutch woman who turns her home into a hiding place for Jews during the Nazi occupation of Holland. Raised in an extremely religious family, Corrie remains a devout Christian throughout her life and devotes herself to fulfilling what she sees as God's will. Prior to the war, Corrie sees Christianity as a mandate to accept personal misfortune as part of the divine plan and to orient her life around helping others. Accordingly, she doesn't complain when the love of her life, Karel, spurns her to marry a wealthier woman; rather, she resigns herself to remaining single and devotes herself to running her family household and running religious programs for mentally disabled people. When Germany occupies Holland and begins to round up and deport Jews, Corrie immediately begins to shelter neighbors and family friends; her faith inspires her to help those in need, even though doing so entails serious risk. Although her enterprise is dangerous and stressful, it also brings out Corrie's latent leadership qualities – she's brave, able to find solutions to tricky problems, and good at maintaining morale and camaraderie among her family and the people they hide. Eventually, the Gestapo uncovers Corrie's activities with the help of a Dutch spy, Jan Vogel; she and most of her family are arrested, but they refuse to give any information about the eight Jews hiding in their house and the fugitives are eventually able to escape. Corrie spends several months in solitary confinement before being sent to the concentration camps of Vught and Ravensbruck with her older sister Betsie. During this time Corrie is inspired and energized by Betsie's exemplary fulfillment of Christian principles and ability to forgive their captors, and even the abusive concentration camp guards. At the same time, she derives a sense of purpose in caring for her older and physically weaker sister. While Betsie dies in Ravensbruck, Corrie is released without explanation soon after and returns to Haarlem shortly before the end of the war. After the war ends, Corrie founds and operates institutional homes both for recovering Holocaust survivors and socially-shunned Dutch collaborators. Eventually, she becomes well-known as a public speaker, and addresses diverse audiences about the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation after the Holocaust. In doing so, she feels she's imparting the teachings she learned from Betsie in the concentration camps.

Betsie ten Boom – Corrie's older sister. Born with pernicious anemia, Betsie is unable to marry or have children, so she spends her adult life in the family home, alongside Corrie. At first, she works as the watch shop's bookkeeper, but eventually she discovers that she's much happier and more skilled at running the household, while Corrie is more interested in watchmaking and the business aspects of the shop. When the family starts to shelter Jews during the war, it's Betsie who manages to feed large numbers of people on slim rations and keeps things running smoothly inside the house. Although Betsie sometimes seems passive or retiring compared to Corrie, who is a natural leader, by the end of the novel she emerges as Corrie's spiritual guide. Even within the bleak

atmosphere of the concentration camp, Betsie is able to rally women of many denominations into clandestine prayer services and **Bible** study, which generates camaraderie and goodwill. Moreover, while Corrie often struggles with anger at their captors and doubt that their imprisonment is part of God's plan, Betsie is able to forgive others seemingly without effort and even prays for the camp guards and the spy who turned the family in. Betsie dies of malnutrition at Ravensbruck, but when Corrie sees her body, she finds that her face seems restored to its previous youth and health; she interprets this as a sign of Betsie's moral rectitude and closeness to the divine. Much of the work Corrie does after the war promoting forgiveness and reconciliation is a continuation of the principles Betsie taught her by example in the concentration camps.

Father / Casper ten Boom – Corrie's father, the benevolent patriarch of the ten Boom family. Father is a highly skilled watchmaker whose shop is one of the oldest institutions in Haarlem. However, he's best known in the city for his good nature and generosity with time and money: Father takes in and raises several foster children after his own are grown, and his shop barely makes a profit because he often forgets to charge his customers. Father inculcates in Corrie and her siblings the Christian principles which guide them throughout their lives; during her childhood, Corrie is always impressed with his thoughtful approach to philosophical dilemmas and steadfast reliance on God. He also emphasizes the importance of tolerance, which later leads the family to risk their lives sheltering Jews. Corrie recalls childhood visits to Father's close friends in the Jewish community, with whom he bonds over a shared love of the Old Testament. By the time of the Nazi occupation, Father is very elderly, but he supports Corrie and Betsie as they turn the house into a shelter and raises morale by reading aloud from the **Bible** every night. Arrested alongside Corrie and the rest of the family, Father becomes ill and dies in a public hospital, without any of his children by his side.

Mama – Corrie's mother. Often bedridden by an unnamed chronic illness, Mama accepts her lot in life without complaint and selflessly devotes herself to aiding the city's poor people. Even after she suffers a stroke and can no longer speak or move, she corresponds with the people she once helped through her daughters, showing Corrie that one can follow God's commandment to help other people no matter what one's own circumstances are. Soon after Nollie gets married and leaves home, Mama dies.

Pickwick – A wealthy Haarlem merchant, frequent customer at the ten Booms' shop, and genial family friend. As Corrie starts to shelter Jews in her house, she discovers that Pickwick is at the center of the Dutch resistance network. In this capacity, Pickwick provides much-needed contacts and help, like introducing Corrie to the architect who constructs the secret room in her house. Pickwick is arrested by the Gestapo at the same time as Corrie and her family; although he undergoes imprisonment and abuse, he survives the war and eventually returns to Haarlem.

Tante Jans – Mama's sister and Corrie's aunt, who lives in the Beje for most of Corrie's childhood. One of the most devout members of the family, Tante Jans is a well-known writer of religious tracts; as a child, Corrie feels that she is very important because she supervises many charitable initiatives and often meets with wealthy donors. At the same time, Tante Jans is oblivious to more prosaic matters like housework, most of which falls to Mama and Tante Anna. While Corrie respects her aunt, through this contrast she implies that tangible efforts to care for a family and help others are more important than theological discussions. Tante Jans dies of diabetes when Corrie is a teenager.

Tante Anna – Mama's sister and Corrie's aunt, who lives in the Beje for most of Corrie's childhood. Due to Mama's frequent bouts of illness, Tante Anna is usually responsible for running the entire household. While Father tries to pay her for the work she does, family resources are so slight that he often needs to ask for the money back when it comes time to pay the bills. Tante Anna dies before the start of the Nazi occupation.

Tante Bep – Mama's sister and Corrie's aunt, who lives in the Beje for most of Corrie's childhood. Prior to living with the family, Tante Bep was a governess, and she likes to reminisce about the privileges she enjoyed among wealthy families and to contrast her nieces' behavior unfavorably to that of her former charges. As a young girl Corrie often worries that her aunt is unhappy, until Mama explains to her that Bep is a negative person by nature. Tante Bep fuels Corrie's determination to maintain a positive and helpful attitude, no matter what circumstances arise.

Toos – A saleslady and bookkeeper at the watch shop. Toos is so unfriendly and bad-natured that most people don't want to employ her, but Father has not only kept her on but softened her with his courtesy and patient nature. Toos stays with the family throughout the war and assists Corrie in turning the house into an illicit shelter.

Karel – A friend of Willem's at seminary. Meeting Karel as a teenager, Corrie immediately falls in love with him. Several years later, during celebrations for Willem's wedding, Corrie and Karel share a brief courtship, even discussing a shared future together before Willem gently tells Corrie that Karel will never marry her because his parents are insistent that he marry a wealthy woman. Several months later, Karel introduces another woman to Corrie as his fiancée. Although Corrie feels devastated, she asks God to help her forgive Karel; eventually, she feels that she selflessly loves him and is able to pray for him and his wife sincerely. This episode helps convince Corrie that forgiveness is not only a moral imperative but a way to feel closer to Jesus.

Nollie ten Boom/von Woerden – Corrie's older sister. As a child, Corrie frequently contrasts Nollie's composure and physical poise to her own shy nature and plain looks; however, she admires her sister's attributes rather than resenting them. Since girls cannot win university scholarships and the family can't afford tuition, Nollie attends a teacher training program, where she meets her husband, Flip von Woerden. Nollie and Flip live close to the Beje and have several children, including Corrie's favorite nephew, Peter. During the occupation, Corrie enlists Nollie into hiding several Jews in her house. Eventually, Nollie's activities are discovered and she is arrested and held in prison for several weeks before Corrie manages to get her medically discharged. She is detained a second time when the Gestapo arrests Corrie and the rest of the family, but she is released in Haarlem, rather than being sent to a concentration camp.

Willem ten Boom – Corrie's older brother. The only one of her siblings to receive a university education, he attends seminary and becomes a pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church. He marries Tine, a family acquaintance, and has four children including Kik, who becomes an integral helper in Corrie's underground network. As part of his ministry, Willem is assigned to proselytize to Haarlem's Jews, but instead of worrying about conversions he founds a nursing home for elderly Jews. In this capacity, he's the first family member to become aware of Germany's persecution of its Jews; he's also the first to start hiding Dutch Jews in his house, and provides Corrie with necessary contacts and advice when she starts sheltering fugitives as well. Arrested at the same time as Corrie, Willem is not sent to a concentration camp but released after several months; however, his health declines so much in prison that he dies months after the end of World War II.

Christoffels – An elderly employee of the watch shop. Once an itinerant clock mender, Christoffels settles down in Father's employ now that his trade is out of fashion and becomes a beloved member of the family. Because he is elderly, physically weak, and relatively powerless, Christoffels is mistreated by a young German apprentice, Otto, whom Father eventually fires. This episode forms Corrie's first awareness of Nazi Germany's persecution of vulnerable people.

Peter von Woerden – Nollie's son, one of Corrie's oldest nephews, and her personal favorite. Peter is an exceptionally gifted musician as well as an impetuous idealist: the organist at his church, Peter breaks the law by playing the Dutch national anthem after it's been outlawed by the Nazis. As a result, he's briefly imprisoned by the Gestapo. Upon his release, he becomes an important member of Corrie's operation, working as a "runner" to ferry supplies and news between different safe houses. Arrested at the same time as Corrie and his parents, he is eventually released and spends the rest of the war in Haarlem.

Kik ten Boom – Willem's son, and Corrie's nephew. Like his cousin Peter, Kik is an important member of Corrie's operation, working as a "runner" to ferry supplies and news between different safe houses. During Corrie's time in the concentration camp, Kik is arrested while helping an American parachutist reach the North Sea, and is then deported to Germany. Several years after the war, the family learns that he has been killed in a concentration camp.

Harry de Vries / "The Bulldog" – A Jewish resident of Haarlem. Prior to the war, Corrie and Father frequently encounter the man walking his beloved bulldogs. During the occupation, when they see that he has a yellow star sewn onto his coat, they befriend him. Harry has converted to Christianity but retains his Jewish cultural identity, and he and his wife Cato become regular visitors at the Beje. Eventually, fearing imminent deportation, they seek help with the ten Booms and Corrie places them in a safe house. However, eventually the house is raided by the Gestapo. Harry is deported and Corrie never discovers what happens to him.

Rolf van Vliet – A Dutch policeman and, prior to the war, a distant family acquaintance. During the occupation Corrie initially distrusts him because he works at the jail where Jews and other prisoners are held. However, after he risks his job to give her information about the imprisoned Harry de Vries, she recruits him into her organization. Rolf provides critical information about the movements of the Dutch police and Gestapo, and after Corrie and her family are arrested, he makes sure that the Jews hiding in her house escape safely.

Leendert – A Jewish schoolteacher who takes refuge in the Beje. An amateur electrician, he installs a buzzer system through which someone downstairs can alert the whole house if a suspicious person is present. Leendert is in the house when the Gestapo arrest the ten Booms, but later escapes with Rolf's help.

Meyer Mossel / Eusebius "Eusie" Smit – A devout Jewish man who takes refuge in the Beje, having been turned away from several other hiding places because his stereotypically Semitic features make him an especially risky fugitive. Corrie rechristens him "Eusebius Smit" in the fake papers she procures for him. Meyer instantly bonds with Father over their shared love of the Old Testament; their relationship shows that faith can bring together people of different religions, rather than driving them apart. Meyer is in the house when the Gestapo arrest the ten Booms, but later escapes with Rolf's help.

Mary Itallie – A Jewish woman who takes refuge in the Beje. Mary's presence is especially risky, as she has asthma and can be heard wheezing even inside the secret room; however, the family and the other fugitives unanimously vote to give her a place in the house. After Corrie's arrest, Mary escapes the house with Rolf's help, but is eventually arrested while walking down the street; no one is able to find out why she risked going outside or what happens to her.

Jop – An apprentice at the watch shop during the Nazi occupation. Eventually, he takes up residence at the Beje as well. Because German troops often seize young men in the streets and send them to work in German factories, the trip to and from work has become too dangerous. Jop begins to work with Corrie as a runner; one night, while delivering news of an imminent Gestapo raid to another safe house, Jop is caught and imprisoned.

Jan Vogel – A Dutch collaborator with the Gestapo who helps expose several resistance organizations, including Corrie's. During her time in the concentration camps, Corrie often feels uncontrollable anger when thinking about Vogel, but when she admits this to Betsie, her sister says that she pities his moral suffering and regularly prays for him. The sisters' different reactions highlight Betsie's extraordinary ability to forgive people who have harmed her, and informs the message of forgiveness and reconciliation that Corrie preaches after the war's end.

The Snake – A young S.S. guard at Ravensbruck. Corrie nicknames her "the Snake" due to the shiny dress she wears under her uniform. The Snake is often vicious towards prisoners, but she also intercedes to get Betsie medical care in the hospital. Her conflicting actions represent the struggle between good and bad impulses that exists within everyone.

The S.S. guard – An unnamed man Corrie meets during a postwar speaking tour in Germany, whom she recognizes as a guard she and Betsie encountered at Ravensbruck. Remembering all the suffering Betsie endured there, Corrie feels as though she can't shake the man's hand and forgive him; but when she prays to Jesus for help, she feels a warm sensation and finds that her arm rises automatically. She interprets this episode as evidence that practicing forgiveness, even in difficult circumstances, brings one closer to the divine.

Otto – A young German and proud Nazi who briefly serves as Father's apprentice, a few years before the war. During his time at the watch shop, Otto begins to abuse Christoffels with almost sociopathic violence, tripping him and even hitting him when he's outside the safety of the Beje. Christoffels is too proud to tell Father, but when Otto smashes his nose Father discovers what's been happening and fires Otto. Willem explains to the family that Otto's behavior stems from the Nazi ethos, which denigrates the old and physically weak as "useless" to society. This episode is Corrie's first encounter with Nazi intolerance.

Annaliese – A young Jewish woman who hides at Nollie's house. When the Gestapo raid the house and ask if Annaliese is a Jew, Nollie, unable to tell a lie, admits that she is. Corrie is angry with her sister for her insistence on following religious dogma to the letter, even when doing so puts Annaliese at risk. However, several days later Corrie finds out that Annaliese has been rescued during a resistance raid on the prison where she's held. Corrie interprets this as evidence that God's benevolence is at work even in events that seem like disasters.

Lieutenant Rahms – A German officer who questions Corrie about her alleged underground work during her imprisonment in Scheveningen. Corrie quickly establishes a rapport with the lieutenant, who is disillusioned with his work as a Nazi occupier and constantly worried about his family in Germany. However, he's also truly committed to certain repugnant Nazi principles, like the idea that mentally disabled people are inherently worthless. Corrie tries to shift his thinking by speaking to him of the **Bible**, and while he seems to be compelled by her arguments it's never clear if he ever changes his mind.

Clergyman A priest who is a friend of Corrie's family. Corrie tries to get the priest to protect a Jewish mother and her baby by taking them into his home, which is in an isolated spot that will ensure the baby's crying isn't heard. However, the clergyman criticizes Corrie for endangering her own family by harboring the mother and baby, and refuses to take the baby. The clergyman's refusal both highlights Corrie and her family's own courage and morality, and also implies the way that the Church failed in this test.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Flip von Woerden – Nollie's husband, a schoolteacher and eventually a principal. Alongside Nollie and Corrie, Flip helps Jews escape during the Nazi occupation; he is arrested with the rest of the family but released in Holland rather than being sent to a concentration camp.

Cato de Vries – Harry de Vries's wife, who is a Christian. Cato goes into hiding with Harry, but due to her religion, she's not deported when the Gestapo raid their safe house. Cato survives the war.

Henk – A Jewish lawyer who takes refuge in the Beje. Henk is in the house when the Gestapo arrest the ten Booms, but later escapes with Rolf's help.

Thea Dacosta – A Jewish woman who takes refuge in the Beje. Thea is in the house when the Gestapo arrest the ten Booms, but later escapes with Rolf's help.

Meta Monsanto – A Jewish woman who takes refuge in the Beje. Meta is in the house when the Gestapo arrest the ten Booms, but later escapes with Rolf's help.

Hans – One of Father's apprentices at the watch shop, prior to the war.

Tine ten Boom – Willem's wife, and Corrie's sister-in-law.

Mr. and Mrs. Weil – A Jewish couple who live across the street from Corrie and own a furrier shop. When German soldiers demolish the shop and kick Mr. Weil out of his home, Corrie helps him contact his wife and arranges his transport out of the city through the underground.

Mr. and Mrs. Kan – A couple who live near the Beje and own a watch shop that usually undersells Father's. Even though they usually do a better business, Father always treats them as friends rather than competition, showing that his moral principles are never compromised by worldly concerns.

Fred Koornstra – A family friend who works in the Food Office. When she needs to procure ration cards for Jewish refugees, Corrie approaches Fred for help. Eventually, he comes up with a scheme to provide her with a hundred fake ration cards per month.

Mrs. Kleermaker – An elderly Jew who comes to the Beje after being kicked out of her home by the Germans. She is the first refugee Corrie helps from outside her circle of family friends.

TERMS

Beje – The Dutch word for the particular kind of tall and narrow house in which Corrie lives. It's also Corrie's affectionate nickname for her home.

NSB – The Nazi party within Holland, existing prior to the war. After the occupation, NSB members collaborated with the Nazis and sometimes acted as spies. In return, they were granted privileges like extra ration cards and sometimes appropriated the property of deported Jews.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

FAITH AND ACTION

The Hiding Place tells the story of Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch woman who, alongside her family, sheltered and saved the lives of dozens of Jews during the Holocaust. Born into an extremely religious Christian family, Corrie is taught that God is active in everyday life and that all worldly events are the result of a divine plan. This belief gives Corrie the strength to withstand the misfortunes that befall her, especially after she is sent to a concentration camp. At the same time, it's Corrie's religious convictions that make her object to the Nazis and impel her to take action against them in the first place. Bolstered by faith, Corrie finds it easier to take personal risks in the name of her beliefs than to passively accept suffering as part of God's plan. It's only through the example of her sister Betsie, with whom she endures imprisonment, that she is able to reconcile these two aspects of her faith, deriving a sense of personal tranquility while also maintaining her spirit of activism.

Raised according to the doctrine of the Dutch Reformed Church, Corrie is taught to believe that everything that happens is the result of God's will; this belief helps the family cope with misfortunes that befall them. Her family members put this belief into practice: often bedridden by chronic illness, Mama accepts her condition as the will of God, coming to believe that it gives her greater compassion for the poor people to whom she ministers. One of the family's most devout members, Tante Jans, is a notorious hypochondriac who drives the family crazy, but when she realizes that she actually will die of diabetes she responds to the news with surprising tranquility. Corrie sees this as evidence that accepting misfortune as God's plan gives one the strength to resist adversity.

The family even interprets misfortunes as proof of God's benevolence. For example, while Corrie is devastated to learn that Father dies ten days after being arrested, she also believes that God has caused his death to spare him the harsh and humiliating conditions of prison.

Conversely, Corrie attributes all good things to God's benevolence. During the occupation, Corrie can't sleep and shares a cup of tea with Betsie. Meanwhile, an explosion causes her bedroom window to break; when she sees the shrapnel in her bed, she realizes that she would have died if she had been sleeping there. Corrie is frightened thinking of this possibility, but Betsie reminds her that "there are no 'ifs' in God's world," meaning that God's will is the only possibility.

While faith gives the ten Booms strength to accept personal difficulties, Corrie also argues through her actions during the war that Christians must act when they observe injustice, rather than ascribing human evil to God's will. Corrie exerts herself and takes substantial risks in order to shelter Jews and help them escape persecution. Although she prays constantly for divine protection, she also takes the initiative to protect herself and those around her by procuring extra supplies, installing a secret room in her house, and training her fugitives to hide quickly in the event of a search.

Corrie even takes action when doing so entails doing things she would normally consider sinful. For example, she tells her first lie in order to procure fake ration cards for the people she's hiding. Her only moment of anger at her family occurs when Nollie refuses to lie to the Gestapo about a Jewish woman she is hiding; even though Nollie has technically obeyed a religious law, Corrie thinks she's really acted against Biblical teachings, because her truthfulness caused a helpless woman to be arrested and potentially killed (though the woman is soon miraculously freed).

Because of episodes like this, the war complicates Corrie's understanding of what "God's will" really is, and how an ordinary person can try to follow it. Her behavior during the

war seems to contrast with her conviction that everything that happens is in accordance with God's will; however, Corrie clearly sees herself as acting on behalf of God. To her, Christian faith requires both personal stoicism and activism on behalf of others.

While Corrie's is easily able to accept God's will when it comes to her own life, she finds it hard see God's hand in the suffering of others, especially when she is sent to the Vught and Ravensbruck concentration camps. At this juncture, it's Betsie's example that shows Corrie the ideal combination of faith and action. Even in situations that Corrie regards as hopeless, Betsie finds a way to make things better. For example, in the bleak women's barracks in Ravensbruck, she's able to create cohesion among the demoralized and squabbling women by praying aloud, and then by organizing clandestine multi-denominational prayer services.

Corrie is particularly upset because the barracks is full of fleas, but Betsie reminds her that the **Bible** tells them to "give thanks in all circumstances," not "in pleasant circumstances." Eventually, Corrie and Betsie realize that the guards don't discover their prayer services because they are too scared of the fleas to regularly inspect the barracks. Corrie views this as confirmation of Betsie's belief that even seeming misfortunes are part of God's plan.

While it's clear that suffering caused by war complicates the somewhat simplistic notion of faith with which Corrie grows up, it doesn't erode it. Corrie accepts that she won't be able to find any divine reason for the cataclysmic events of the Holocaust. Rather than trying to explain God's will on a large scale, she focuses on the way that her own personal suffering has been part of a divine plan, suggesting that it encourages her to rely more thoroughly on God and gives her an opportunity to turn her passive faith into activism.

TOLERANCE

In *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom and her family help dozens of Jews escape the Holocaust in Nazi-occupied Holland. An extremely religious family, the ten Booms are defined by their religious beliefs. However, rather than seeing religion as something that sets them apart or makes them better than others, the ten Booms feel that tolerance and inclusivity are among Christianity's strongest imperatives. Corrie portrays tolerance—of religious minorities and other marginalized groups—not just as a reaction to the Nazi occupation, but as a core part of her family's ethos. Moreover, she repeatedly points out the inherent intolerance of Nazi Germany, arguing that its attitude threatens all Dutch people, not just the groups it explicitly targets.

Even prior to World War II, Corrie's family not only tolerates but actively befriends Jews. Their version of Christianity drives them not only to see the essential humanity in all people, but also to identify with other religious people, no matter their specific faith. Corrie fondly recalls childhood visits to Father's Jewish business associates, many of whom become close family friends. As a girl, she often observes hours-long religious discussions in which Father and his friends share their love for the **Old Testament** and appreciate the intricacies of each other's faith, rather than competing or trying to convert each other. Later, Father bonds instantly with a particularly religious Jew, Meyer, who seeks shelter at their house. It's clear that his lifelong embrace of tolerance inspires him to take risks for Jews during the war.

Similarly, prior to the war, Corrie's older brother Willem is a Dutch Reformed pastor charged with converting Jews in the Dutch community; however, he actually sets up a nursing home for elderly Jews, caring for them without seriously attempting to challenge their religious convictions. In fact, it's through Willem's connections that Corrie first becomes involved with the Dutch underground. Like Father, Willem's wartime activism is a direct outgrowth of the tolerance he's practiced throughout his life.

In some sense, the ten Booms' respect for Jews stems from their conception of Judaism as a precursor to Christianity; Corrie views her friend Harry de Vries as a particularly sympathetic and heroic Jew because he has converted to Christianity, while maintaining (and eventually being killed for) his Jewish cultural identity. While appropriating Judaism as part of the Christian tradition is certainly different from respecting Judaism on its own terms, it's important to note that their Christian faith inspires them not to denigrate others but to value and help them.

Corrie also emphasizes Nazi Germany's lack of tolerance towards a variety of vulnerable groups, showing that the state is not targeting only Jews but diversity of any kind. In light of this, she argues, the best way to combat Nazi principles is to practice tolerance in daily life, no matter the circumstances. The ten Booms first become acquainted with Nazi intolerance some years before the war, when their German apprentice, Otto, behaves with almost sociopathic violence towards Christoffels, an elderly employee at the watch shop. Corrie and Father are perplexed at his behavior, but Willem explains that the Nazis encourage people to disrespect the sick and weak.

Prior to the war, Corrie conducts a church program for mentally disabled children, and during her imprisonment at Scheveningen, she tells her interrogator, Lieutenant Rahms, about her work. He feels that her work is useless, saying that "surely one normal person is worth all the half-wits in the world." Corrie sees this man as the epitome of "true National-Socialist philosophy"; his beliefs show that the Nazis devalue and persecute all vulnerable people, and thus pose a danger to society as a whole, not just minority groups like Jews.

During her internment at Ravensbruck, Corrie is struck by the beauty of the clandestine prayer services Betsie holds, in which

women from many denominations share their own hymns and chants, and others translate Bible verses so that everyone can understand them. In bringing together women of different faiths and nationalities for a common, positive purpose, this moment represents the antithesis of Nazi principles. Although Corrie cannot continue her activist work in prison, she can still practice and appreciate tolerance in these harsh circumstances.

Corrie's life-saving work during the war is a brave and obvious display of religious tolerance. However, she makes clear that her wartime heroism was inspired and enabled by a lifetime of smaller and seemingly more mundane acts, like having lunch with people of other faiths or helping the mentally disabled. Ultimately, she shows the reader that while most people will not face the circumstances she did, anyone can take the spirit of her beliefs into daily life.

FORGIVENESS

In *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom and her family witness and experience great injustice as they shelter Jews in their house during the Nazi occupation of Holland. Although Corrie is often angered by the behavior of those around her, she tries to resist these feelings, believing that as a Christian she should not hold grudges but instead forgive those who have harmed her, even when it seems impossible to do so. Corrie argues that forgiveness is not only an act of kindness towards a wrongdoer, but an opportunity to mimic the behavior of Jesus, who forgave his persecutors even though they tormented him and sentenced him to death. Ultimately, Corrie believes that by forgiving others she can access the divine presence that often seems inaccessible in daily life.

Corrie's brief love affair, one of the most important events of her adolescence, provides an important lesson on forgiveness that she will draw on as an adult. As a teenager, Corrie falls in love with Karel, her brother Willem's friend from seminary. During the weeks of celebrations for Willem's wedding, the two become very close, walking every day and discussing a shared future, although Karel has not explicitly proposed. Eventually, Willem gently explains that Karel is being duplicitous; he cannot marry Corrie because his parents are determined that he marry someone wealthy. Shortly afterward, Karel visits the house with his fiancée, never acknowledging that he knowingly allowed Corrie to develop feelings for him.

Corrie is devastated and everyone in the family believes that Karel has behaved badly, but Father comforts her by encouraging her to trust her feelings to the Lord, saying that "whenever we cannot love in the old, human way … God can give us the perfect way." Corrie asks God to "give me Your way of seeing Karel." Shortly afterward, Corrie attends her sister Nollie's wedding and reflects that she herself will probably never marry; however, she finds she's able to think of Karel without "the slightest trace of hurt" and to pray for him sincerely. She believes that her ability to love Karel selflessly is a gift from God, something that brings her closer to the divine.

During her imprisonment, Corrie grapples with forgiveness in much more difficult terms, as within the harsh environment of the concentration camp there isn't "on a human level, anything to love at all." At this time it's Betsie, imprisoned alongside Corrie, whose forgiving nature remains the most steadfast and who reminds Corrie of the importance of practicing forgiveness. Whenever Corrie expresses anger about the guards who abuse them or the people who stand by while they are imprisoned, Betsie reminds her that they are suffering internally, and that they should pray for them.

For example, Corrie can't stop thinking about Jan Vogel, the spy who turned her family in. When she asks Betsie if the thought of this man bothers her, Betsie replies that she can't stop thinking about "how dreadfully he must be suffering," and that she prays for him regularly. Later, Betsie and Corrie are digging trenches in the snow when a guard mocks Betsie for working slowly and slaps her in the face. Corrie is murderously angry, but Betsie just laughs with the guard and turns her face away. This gesture clearly parallels the famous **Biblical** moment when Jesus advocates that one should "turns the other cheek" instead of fighting their persecutors. Betsie's ability to forgive, even in the instant when someone is harming her, thus allows her to access the divine in a way that Corrie feels she cannot.

Although Betsie dies in Ravensbruck, Corrie spreads her sister's teachings after the war by promoting forgiveness and reconciliation between Holocaust survivors and perpetrators. Giving up her own house to former members of the NSB (the Dutch Nazi party that collaborated with German occupying forces), who are now shunned and reviled by Dutch society, Corrie practices forgiveness in her own life, caring for the very people who turned her in to the Gestapo.

Corrie also runs a separate institution for Holocaust survivors outside Haarlem. She realizes that, in order to live fulfilling lives, these people don't just need to recover physically but have to overcome their anger towards their former abusers. While most survivors are understandably reluctant to embrace Corrie's suggestions about reconciliation with the NSB, eventually they soften and even behave charitably, in one case bringing carrots from their garden to the NSB shelter. Corrie's description of this moment as a "miracle" suggests that, through the difficult act of forgiveness, survivors have come in contact with God, which they would not have been able to do otherwise.

After Corrie becomes well-known as a public speaker, she starts to address church congregations in Germany, where "the hunger was greatest" for forgiveness. One night, she recognizes a former S.S. guard from Ravensbruck, and his face reminds her of Betsie's suffering there. When the man reaches to shake her hand, she feels so "angry … and vengeful" that she can't return the gesture. But as she prays to Jesus for help in

forgiving him, she feels her arm grow warm and move on its own accord. For Corrie, this moment is not only a good deed but a moment of direct interaction with Jesus himself.

As Corrie grows older, she realizes that forgiveness is valuable for several reasons. It allows formerly hostile people to put aside their differences and work together for the benefit of society, and it also allows people who have harbored resentment to live happier and more fulfilling lives. Most importantly, it allows people to mimic the behavior of Jesus in everyday life, thus bringing them as close to God as possible.

FAMILY

In *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom tells the story of her family's participation in an underground movement to shelter Jews during the Nazi occupation of Holland in World War II. Although the memoir is centered around Corrie's experiences, it also emphasizes the extent to which she is grounded in a strong family network. As she comes of age, Corrie's family provides a firm moral and religious framework, while also liberating her from some of the social pressures attendant upon women of her era. When the occupation begins, Corrie is able to turn her house into a shelter due to her preexisting family connections. Finally, during her long imprisonment, Corrie is sustained and encouraged by the presence of her sister Betsie. Their close relationship, which culminates in their time at Ravensbruck, allows Corrie to view imprisonment as a tale not just of suffering but of the triumph of love between siblings, and a general testament to the value of family relationships.

In some ways, Corrie's family functions according to traditional gender roles, but it also allows Corrie to pursue a life that contravenes expectations for women. Father is the undisputed moral and intellectual head of the family; while Mama and Corrie's aunts take care of all the housework, she always looks to Father to explain philosophical questions and resolve moral difficulties. Similarly, it's only Willem who receives a college education; with no chance at a professional career, the daughters must remain at home, as Corrie and Betsie do, or get married, like Nollie.

Although Corrie never leaves her childhood home, through her family she's liberated from some gender norms. Father encourages Corrie's interest in watchmaking and values her ability to handle the bookkeeping side of the business better than he can. Eventually, Betsie takes over the housekeeping while Corrie becomes Holland's first certified female watchmaker, as well as the only person ensuring that the watch shop remains profitable. As Father grows older and Betsie begins to defer to Corrie, she becomes the unofficial head of the family—a position that's reflected in the fact that she makes all the decisions once they begin to shelter Jews. Helping support her family, she's able to defy expectations for women while still living a life that is comfortable and grounded in her strong family network.

This family network not only gives Corrie personal satisfaction but also facilitates her underground work during the war. Corrie gets her first contacts and advice from Willem, who is already starting to shelter Jews in his nursing home by the time people have turned to Corrie for help. Moreover, it's Father's moral support and Betsie's able management of housekeeping logistics that allow the operation to become so successful.

As she starts sheltering more people and needs more help, Corrie develops a network of teenagers working as runners, in which her nephews Kik and Peter are prominent members, as are some of the foster children Father has raised over the years. She also turns to her network of family friends for things like information about the police and fake ration cards. Her family's wide network and long tradition of helping others means that Corrie has many trusted friends who become resources when she needs them.

The importance of family relationships as a coping mechanism is thrown into relief by Corrie's long imprisonment. Throughout her solitary confinement in Scheveningen prison, Corrie's greatest distress is her separation from Betsie, from whom she's never been apart. It's the occasional glimpse of Betsie's cell that gives her the moral strength to persevere. Similarly, after Corrie befriends Lieutenant Rahms, who works in the prison, he facilitates a brief family reunion on the pretext of reading Father's will. This poignant moment emphasizes the purity and essential value of family bonds, even in the midst of so much cruelty and injustice.

When Corrie is sent to the German concentration camps of Vught and Ravensbruck, she's separated from everyone but Betsie. While these chapters describe the harshness of concentration camp life, they strongly emphasize the strength of Corrie and Betsie's sibling relationship and the extent to which it enables them to keep fighting. Corrie is able to withstand the concentration camp because of Betsie's calm and tranquility, as well as her feeling of responsibility for her older and weaker sister. Although Betsie dies at Ravensbruck, Corrie believes that her sister's presence has enabled her to survive.

Throughout Corrie's life, her family is a source of personal satisfaction and fulfillment. Moreover, it's her strong family network that facilitates her fight against Nazi oppression. Ultimately, the novel provides a vision of social justice activism that is grounded in strong, selfless personal bonds such as those that bind the ten Booms together.

MORAL CHOICES

In *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom relates her family's mission to save Jews during the World War II Nazi occupation of Holland. In order to procure safe houses and facilitate these people's escape from the country, Corrie develops a wide network of sympathetic and

trustworthy people who provide resources, information, and even money. Her experience as a member of the underground shows her the capacity of ordinary people to be brave and selfless, even when helping strangers puts them and their families at risk. At the same time, she shows some moments in which people fail to live up to their highest potential, instead succumbing to cowardice or greed. Ultimately, the novel argues that people are not totally good or bad by nature; instead, they play out different possibilities of their character through important moments of moral choice.

As she becomes more involved in the underground resistance, Corrie comes to appreciate the bravery displayed by ordinary people, even some she didn't expect to be sympathetic to her cause. In her first days of hiding people, she has to procure ration cards in order to feed them. To do so, she consults an acquaintance, Fred Koornstra. She knows that he could turn her in for sheltering Jews, but instead he develops a scheme to manufacture fake ration cards and ends up providing her hundreds per month. He shows how an ordinary bureaucrat can make the choice to take on a lifesaving role.

Corrie is also surprised when Rolf van Vliet, a policeman and vague acquaintance, learns of her operation and begins to provide inside information of police movements. Similarly, she's touched when a neighbor deduces that she's hiding people in her house but, instead of turning them in, simply warns them to be quieter. Even though Corrie's work is made necessary by the injustice and cruelty of Nazi Germany and Dutch collaborators, it makes her aware of the hidden bravery that people can display in times of crisis.

At the same time, Corrie shows disappointing moments in which people who could have saved lives turn away from bravery or demonstrate cowardice. Once, while Corrie is struggling to find a hiding place for a young Jewish mother and baby, a clergyman and friend of the family comes into the shop looking for a spare watch part. Corrie decides to trust the man and asks him to help; she even places the baby in his arms. She sees "compassion and fear struggle in his face," but eventually he says he won't take the risk. Corrie has to send the woman and baby to a safe house that the Gestapo is already suspicious of, and soon afterward the two are discovered and taken.

While Corrie is in Scheveningen, she's interrogated by Lieutenant Rahms, who is unexpectedly kind to her and says explicitly that he "cannot bear the work" he does at the prison. Seeing an opportunity, Corrie speaks to him about the **Bible** and asks him to reunite her with Betsie. However, while he clearly perceives some of the wrongs of Nazi Germany, he's too scared to act directly against his country. He tells her that he's powerless against the prison and refuses to help her. He also parrots many elements of Nazi philosophy, telling Corrie that it's silly to work with the mentally disabled because "half-wits" are useless. Through Lieutenant Rahms, Corrie shows how the ability to perceive injustice can fight with and eventually succumb to the convenience and safety of ignoring it.

Ultimately, Corrie's depiction of the people who help or hurt her cause evinces a great belief in human agency: people can either act directly to help others, as Fred Koornstra does, or to harm them, like the nameless clergyman. In some sense, this is an optimistic vision, showing the power of flawed people to do good things and effect positive change in the world. However, it also highlights the possibility for cowardice that exists within everyone, warning that people must always cultivate the worthier aspects of their character rather than becoming complacent.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE BIBLE

The Bible represents the Word of God for Christians, and it is the physical manifestation of the faith on which Corrie and her family predicate their actions. For the ten Booms, the Bible always maintains its essential properties of truth and purity, even when worldly institutions become corrupted. For example, after Germany conquers Holland, the ten Booms know that their government has succumbed to Nazi philosophy, and that news outlets like the radio only give them propaganda and misinformation. In response, the family relies on Biblical teachings for a sense of direction and stability. When the ten Booms are arrested, a Nazi official tries to twist Biblical philosophy to his own ends, telling Father that the Bible commands people to respect the state, no matter what; however, Father adeptly refutes him by arguing that the Bible actually commands people to follow God, whether or not his teachings align with the goals of the state. This small victory confirms the role of the Bible as an emblem of moral stability, helping the ten Booms navigate the murky moral landscape of wartime Holland.

At the same time, Corrie presents the Bible and its teachings as flexible and adaptive, rather than static. For Father, the Bible is an inspiration for tolerance and acceptance; he bonds with a Jewish fugitive, Meyer Mossel, over their mutual love and exhaustive knowledge of Biblical texts. In this way, the Bible serves as an impetus to overcome the sectarianism that pervades their society. While she's in prison, Corrie tears a Bible smuggled in by Nollie into pieces, giving each piece to a different prisoner. This physical action shows that the Bible, while a firm representation of justice, is not rigid but can serve in different ways to fill individual spiritual needs. By the end of the memoir, the Bible emerges as both an overarching moral guide and an intimate spiritual comfort.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Chosen Books edition of *The Hiding Place* published in 1974.

The One Hundredth Birthday Party Quotes

Young and old, poor and rich, scholarly gentlemen and illiterate servant girls—only to Father did it seem that they were all alike. That was Father's secret: not that he overlooked the differences in people; that he didn't know they were there.

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker), Father / Casper ten Boom

Related Themes:

Page Number: 29

Explanation and Analysis

In the first chapter of the memoir, Corrie hosts a hundredth-anniversary celebration in honor of the watch shop her family owns. She's proud to note that people from all social classes attend the gathering—a mixture of customers, friends, or people to whom Father has provided guidance or aid over the years. Corrie attributes the family's wide network to Father's lifelong practice of tolerance and acceptance—as she points out here, he's so committed to valuing all people equally that he doesn't seem to notice the differences between them. It's this strong network on which Corrie will rely as she begins her underground operation. In this sense, the family's long history of tolerance before the war is what enables their activism during the Nazi occupation. At the end of this chapter, Willem arrives with a Jewish refugee who has just arrived at his house after being persecuted by a gang in Munich. The anti-Semitic persecution this man represents is a stark contrast to the diverse atmosphere of the party and foreshadows the crises which Corrie will soon face on her own Dutch soil.

I know that the experiences of our lives, when we let God use them, become the mysterious and perfect preparation for the work He will give us to do.

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 31

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of the first chapter, Corrie feels disconcerted by the sudden arrival of the Jewish refugee at the party and worries about the threat Germany poses to the future. This worry leads her to reflect on the course her life has taken so far. On one level, this remark is a stylistic device, enabling Corrie to proceed into the new chapter about her upbringing. However, it also conveys Corrie's religious explanation of human experiences, particularly bad ones. Corrie firmly believes that every episode in her life is part of God's plan, spurring her personal moral growth and enabling her to do God's "work" later on. In her young life, Corrie will apply this argument to domestic tragedies like Karel's betrayal, which teaches her forgiveness, and Tante Jans's death, which teaches her to have strength in adversity. Later, she will use this belief to explain the huge suffering she experiences while imprisoned in concentration camps. It's this belief that enables Corrie to remain stoic in the face of personal misfortune, and to reconcile her experience of seemingly meaningless suffering with her belief in an omnipotent and benevolent God.

Full Table Quotes

After the briefest possible discussion of business, Father would draw a small Bible form his traveling case; the wholesaler [...] would snatch a book or scroll out of a drawer, clap a prayer cap onto his head; and the two of them would be off, arguing, comparing, interpreting, contradiction—reveling in each other's company.

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker), Father / Casper ten Boom

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 40

Explanation and Analysis

In this chapter, Corrie relates the notable events of her childhood and upbringing. As a young girl, one of her favorite activities was accompanying Father on his weekly trips to visit wholesalers in Amsterdam, usually Jews. Not only does Father accept Jews as coworkers, he actively befriends them, often passing entire mornings in their houses. It's also important that Corrie shows the men bonding over their mutual love for the Old Testament. Rather than seeing the Jews as different or alien because of their religious practices, Father focuses on the scriptures

they share. From moments like this, the Bible emerges not as text that distinguishes between religions but one that draws them together. Throughout the novel, sacred texts will encourage Corrie not to consider religious differences but to recognize the essential humanity in each person, regardless of their religion.

Karel Quotes

❝ God loves Karel—even more than you do—and if you ask Him, He will give you His love for this man, a love nothing can prevent, nothing destroy. Whenever we cannot love in the old, human way, Corrie, God can give us the perfect way.

Related Characters: Father / Casper ten Boom (speaker), Karel, Corrie ten Boom

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 60

Explanation and Analysis

As a teenager, Corrie meets and falls in love with Karel, Willem's friend from seminary. Although Karel flirts with her intensely, he eventually chooses to marry a wealthy and well-connected woman instead; when she learns of his betrayal, Corrie is distraught and sobs in her bedroom. Trying to comfort her, Father encourages Corrie not to forget about Karel or feel anger towards him, but to forgive him, a concept he frames as "giving" her love to God. Father presents forgiveness not just as a good deed towards others, but also an opportunity for personal fulfillment. By forgiving Karel, Corrie can actually preserve the feelings of love that have been so special for her, rather than repressing or destroying him. Moreover, she has the opportunity to feel towards another person the way God feels; thus, the act of forgiveness is a rare moment of closeness to the divine. Corrie will frequently remember Father's advice during her long imprisonment, when she grapples with the idea of forgiving actively cruel people who have done her much more serious harm.

The Watch Shop Quotes

❝ Willem shook his head. "It's very deliberate," he said. "It's because Christoffels is old. The old have no value to the State. They're also harder to train in new ways of thinking. Germany is systematically teaching disrespect for old age."

Related Characters: Willem ten Boom (speaker), Christoffels, Otto, Corrie ten Boom

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 75

Explanation and Analysis

In the years before the German invasion, Father hires a young German apprentice named Otto. Otto is an avowed Nazi who often brags about Germany's superiority. More troublingly, Corrie observes that he is extremely rude to Christoffels, an employee at the shop, denying him the small courtesies to which she believes the elderly are due. Better acquainted with Nazi philosophy, Willem explains that Otto is following a deliberate policy of intolerance towards the elderly advocated by the Nazis. Although Corrie's underground work mostly combats the Nazi threat to Jews, she also presents moments like these that show Nazi intolerance towards many other social groups, such as the elderly or the mentally disabled. In doing so, she argues that intolerance is never limited to specific targets but rather becomes a threat to large portions of society. In this sense, it's not only morally wrong but practically unwise for people to remain complacent about persecution of Jews, thinking themselves safe.

Invasion Quotes

❝ And then, incredibly, Betsie began to pray for the Germans up there in the planes, caught in the fist of the giant evil loose in Germany [...] "Oh, Lord," I whispered, "listen to Betsie, not me, because I cannot pray for these men at all."

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker), Betsie ten Boom

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 79

Explanation and Analysis

On the night that Germany invades Holland, Corrie and Betsie wake up to planes fighting in the sky over Haarlem. Both sisters immediately begin to pray, but Corrie is astounded to hear her sister praying not only for the Dutch but for their enemies as well. This is the first depiction of Betsie's radical attitude towards forgiveness and her remarkable ability to forgive people even as they are actively trying to harm her; essentially, she's acting out the principles that Father explained to Corrie after Karel's

betrayal. This moment lays the groundwork for Betsie's insistence on forgiveness later, when she and Corrie are imprisoned together. Corrie finds that this practice comes much less naturally to her than it does to her sister, and even sometimes doubts if she should forgive people who have committed serious crimes, like informing on resistance workers. However, by eventually founding rehabilitation homes for former Dutch Nazis, she acts out her sister's beliefs and evinces a deep faith in them.

> But if God has shown us bad times ahead, it's enough for me that He knows about them. That's why He sometimes shows us things, you know—to tell us that this too is in His hands.

Related Characters: Betsie ten Boom (speaker), Corrie ten Boom

Related Themes:

Page Number: 80

Explanation and Analysis

While Corrie and Betsie are praying during the German invasion, Corrie has an ominous vision of her family being conveyed through the city's main square in a cart. When she shares this vision with Betsie, her sister tells her that she should not feel troubled but rather comforted that God is helping her to prepare for future challenges. This is an extension of Corrie's statement at the end of the first chapter, arguing that all experiences are part of a divine plan and that God is always acting benevolently towards each person. Of course, this vision does eventually seem to come true—after their arrest, Corrie and her family members are loaded into lorries in the main square and taken to Scheveningen. This is one of the most traumatic events in Corrie's life, but she's able to remain calm and feel that God is still guiding her life, despite the fact that she's fallen into the hands of the Nazis. This principle allows Corrie and Betsie to believe that God is acting on their behalf even when their actual circumstances seem to grow worse and worse.

> Some joined the NSB simply for the benefits: more food, more clothing coupons, the best jobs and housing. But others became NSBers out of conviction. Nazism was a disease to which the Dutch, too, were susceptible, and those with an anti-Semitic bias fell sick of it first.

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 84

Explanation and Analysis

Even before the Nazis begin targeting and deporting Jews, Corrie sees an uptick in anti-Semitic sentiment among Dutch people, from restaurants that won't serve Jews to vandalism of Jewish shops. Many of the perpetrators have joined the NSB, or Dutch Nazi party. Corrie presents these people not as complete villains but rather as flawed humans who succumb to tough circumstances and the desire to blame someone for the problems currently afflicting Holland. Their actions are the result not of pure hatred but a series of seemingly small choices to prioritize material gain over principles. By characterizing NSB members in this way, Corrie encourages the reader to identify with and understand their moral weakness, implicitly arguing that no one is so bad that they are past forgiveness. On the other hand, because she depicts morality as the result of choices, rather than innate character, she also suggests that everyone is able to and should make good moral choices, holding her reader to a high standard of moral behavior.

> We knew, of course, that there was an underground in Holland [...] but [the rumors] featured things we believed were wrong in the sight of God. Stealing, lying, murder. Was this what God wanted in times like these? How should a Christian act when evil was in power?

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 87

Explanation and Analysis

When Corrie's nephew, Kik, helps transport a Jewish neighbor to a safe house, he tells her jokingly that she's part of the "underground" now. This is the first time that Corrie conceives of her actions not as neighborly kindness but illicit and even dangerous activism. Corrie can't see herself as part of the underground worker because this involves breaking the religious rules to which she's been faithful her entire life. However, very soon she will have to engage in deception in order to furnish ration cards for the fugitives she hides. In situations like this, Corrie has to weigh fulfilling rules against breaking them and saving lives. While Corrie

never murders anyone in her work, she does frequently break commandments against lying and stealing; however, she still firmly believes herself to be fulfilling God's will. As a result, Corrie's conception of religion broadens. She no longer sees Christianity as a set of rigid behavioral rules which must be followed at all costs, but a set of moral principles which she must find a way to obey in her own time and place. This attitude emphasizes the universality and adaptability of Christianity.

The Secret Room Quotes

The man bent forward, his hand in spite of himself reaching for the tiny fist curled around the blanket. For a moment I saw compassion and fear struggle in his face. Then he straightened. "No. Definitely not. We could lose our lives for that Jewish child."

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker), Betsie ten Boom

Related Themes:

Page Number: 115

Explanation and Analysis

One evening, Corrie receives a Jewish mother and newborn child into her house. She needs to find a secure place for these vulnerable fugitives to hide, and she feels she's in luck when a clergyman acquaintance with a house outside the city visits the next morning. Taking a risk, she asks him to participate in her operation, but he doesn't want to risk his safety. It's notable that this refusal comes from a man of faith—while Christianity inspires the ten Booms to fight in justice, in others it seems to serve as an excuse for complacency. Describing his indecision as he holds the baby, Corrie presents him not as an uncomplicated coward but a flawed human facing a difficult moral choice. Throughout the memoir, Corrie refuses to categorize people as heroes or villains but merely portrays them as they succeed or fail in living up to the moral demands of specific moments. In doing so, she suggests that anyone can do the brave work in which she's engaged, but she also forces the reader to identify uncomfortably with characters like the clergyman who turn down the opportunity to do so.

Eusie Quotes

Love. How did one show it? How could God Himself show truth and love at the same time in a world like this?

By dying. The answer stood out for me sharper and chillier than it ever had before that night: the shape of a Cross etched on the history of the world.

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker), Nollie ten Boom/von Woerden

Related Themes:

Page Number: 108

Explanation and Analysis

While Corrie is visiting Nollie, German soldiers raid the house looking for young men they can deport to German factories. Fortunately the search is short and doesn't uncover the basement where Nollie's sons are hiding, but afterwards the family discusses whether it's acceptable to lie to soldiers—traditionally a Christian sin—when doing so can save someone's life. Nollie maintains that one should always tell the truth and rely on God's protection, but Corrie says this is impractical; in fact, she is only able to hide Jews because she lies and deceives Nazi occupiers.

After this discussion, Corrie wonders how she can follow Christian principles like honesty when doing so involves submission to the Nazis, whom she feels sure are contravening God's will. The image she suddenly sees is that of Christ's crucifixion, the ultimate gesture of bravery and love. Corrie never truly refutes her sister's standpoint, but this moment does suggest that people should try to follow God by emulating Christ's defining characteristics, like his willingness to sacrifice himself, rather than by adhering rigidly to less central rules.

Storm Clouds Gather Quotes

Each night we lighted one more candle as Eusie read the story of the Maccabees. Then we would sing, haunting, melancholy, desert music. We were all very Jewish those evenings.

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker), Meyer Mossel / Eusebius "Eusie" Smit

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 134

Explanation and Analysis

Normally, Corrie and her family celebrate Christmas in December; however, with so many fugitives hiding in the Beje they feel it's important to commemorate Hanukkah as well. Even though the holiday is unfamiliar to Corrie she is deeply moved by the rituals, especially in the context of the danger Dutch Jews are currently facing. Interacting with Jewish customs doesn't make her feel alienated; it makes her recognize the essential values and anxieties that Jews and Christians share—so much so that she describes herself as feeling "Jewish." It's important that Eusie is reading out loud from a Biblical text—as usual, the Bible works to promote tolerance and respect between religions. This moment recalls the earlier episode in which Corrie watches Father engage in hours-long religious discussions with Jewish business associates, showing how Corrie's current circumstances are the outgrowth of the principles her family has espoused for decades.

Scheveningen Quotes

❝ Could it be part of the pattern first revealed in the Gospels? Hadn't Jesus—and here my reading became intent indeed—hadn't Jesus been defeated as utterly and unarguably as our little group and our small plans had been?

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 164

Explanation and Analysis

Desolately lonely in solitary confinement at the Dutch prison Scheveningen, Corrie is grateful when a nurse smuggles copies of all the Gospels into her cell. At first Corrie reads them for a mental escape from her current situation, but eventually the Gospel helps her to analyze and reflect on her work and imprisonment. She begins to see her arrest not as a personal failure or a piece of random misfortune but rather as part of God's plan, a plan that aligns with the events in the Bible. In this sense, imprisonment is almost a blessing because it reminds her of the immediacy of the Bible's teachings and the relevance of its events to modern life. Seeing her misfortunes as similar to Christ's own helps Corrie rationalize her suffering as the work of a benevolent God and avoid losing faith, despite her harsh circumstances.

The Lieutenant Quotes

❝ In the Bible I learned that God values us not for our strength or our brains but simply because He has made us. Who knows, in His eyes a half-wit may be worth more than a watchmaker. Or—a lieutenant.

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker), Lieutenant Rahms

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 173

Explanation and Analysis

At one point during her imprisonment in Scheveningen, Corrie is questioned by Lieutenant Rahms about her alleged work with the underground. Lieutenant Rahms turns out to be disillusioned about his work in the army and overwhelmed with worry for his family at home, and he end Corrie spend a lot of time conversing about their prewar lives. Warming to him, Corrie tells him about the programs she ran for children with mental disabilities, only for the Lieutenant to respond that it's a waste of her time to work with them instead of "normal people." Here, Corrie responds by suggesting firmly that the Bible advocates tolerance and prioritizes the equal value of every person to God, rather than the different values assigned by flawed human hierarchies. Again, the Bible emerges as a proponent of radical equality, diametrically opposed to Nazi philosophy; moreover, quoting it enables Corrie to speak unpleasant truths with some safety, even though she's addressing a man against whom she's powerless.

Vught Quotes

❝ "Betsie, don't you feel anything about Jan Vogel? Doesn't it bother you?"

"Oh yes, Corrie! Terribly! I've felt for him ever since I knew—and pray for him whenever his name comes into my mind. How dreadfully he must be suffering!"

Related Characters: Betsie ten Boom, Corrie ten Boom (speaker), Jan Vogel

Related Themes:

Page Number: 192

Explanation and Analysis

While they are imprisoned in the Vught concentration camp, Betsie and Corrie learn the identity of the spy who betrayed them from another prisoner. Knowing that the duplicity of a specific person has ended her work and caused pointless suffering makes Corrie furious, unable to concentrate or even pray sincerely. However, as she discovers here Betsie seems unconcerned with Jan Vogel's misdeeds and more worried about his own moral sufferings. In this passage, Betsie's lack of bitterness or vengeful thoughts becomes clear; although Corrie finds it hard to emulate, her sister's insistence on forgiveness becomes central to her own beliefs and her work after the war. It's important that only during harsh imprisonment does Betsie's behavior emerge so strikingly. Corrie believes that, because she has experienced spiritual epiphanies in the concentration camp, her imprisonment is part of God's plan for her moral development, rather than a random or meaningless catastrophe.

Ravensbruck Quotes

❝ Life in Ravensbruck took place on two separate levels, mutually impossible. One, the observable, external life, grew every day more horrible. The other, the life we lived with God, grew daily better, truth upon truth, glory upon glory.

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 206

Explanation and Analysis

When Corrie and Betsie transfer to Ravensbruck they face even more inhumane conditions than at Vught, but they manage to smuggle their Bible into the camp and quickly form a prayer group with other women. Although Corrie has always been devoutly religious, these are some of the most intense spiritual experiences of her life and she feels that studying the Bible now not only strengthens her morale but allows her to feel closer to God than she ever has before. The suffering at Ravensbruck often seems pointless, evidence of God's absence, rather than presence, in human affairs. However, Corrie's focus on "the life we lived with God" imbues it with some meaning and characterizes it as an opportunity for moral growth. It's important to note that this explanation only applies to Corrie's personal experience; she can't rationalize the massive atrocities that are occurring as a result of the war and the Holocaust. However, this mindset does allow Corrie to confront her own suffering without losing her faith in God.

❝ I had believed the Bible always, but reading it now had nothing to do with belief. It was simply a description of the way things were—of hell and heaven, of how men act and how God acts. I had read a thousand times the story of Jesus' arrest—how soldiers had slapped Him, laughed at Him, flogged Him. Now such happenings had faces and voices.

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 207

Explanation and Analysis

While she is at Ravensbruck, Corrie's relationship to the Bible transforms. She has always relied on it for moral guidance and followed its teachings, but she is used to thinking of its events as abstract parables rather than literal fact. The atrocities she's experiencing now bring to life the cruelties described in the Bible and, more importantly, Christ's response to them. Paradoxically, although life at Ravensbruck is crushingly difficult it gives new strength in Corrie's faith and allows her to feel personally close to Christ by emulating his actions, rather than to lose faith in the teachings of the Bible. As she does at many other points, Corrie emphasizes the Bible's value as an adaptable and relevant guide to modern life, rather than characterizing it as a distant text. Moreover, she uses her new reading of this text to give meaning to an experience that seems pointlessly awful.

❝ "'Give thanks in all circumstances,'" she quoted. "It doesn't say, 'in pleasant circumstances.' Fleas are part of this place where God has put us."

Related Characters: Betsie ten Boom (speaker), Corrie ten Boom

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 210

Explanation and Analysis

For her first weeks at Ravensbruck, Corrie and Betsie live in a dismal quarantine barracks outside the main camp, Corrie hopes that after they pass the medical inspection they will have better living conditions, but she's dismayed to find that the barracks inside the camp is freezing, crowded, and infested with fleas. Corrie feels overwhelmed by the possibility of living in such a place, but Betsie quotes a Bible passage they have read just that morning, exhorting the reader to thank God no matter what. Accordingly, she earnestly thanks God for the fleas. Corrie believes that she is interpreting the Bible too literally and finds it hard to pray beside her; however, later in the chapter she finds out that because of the fleas the Nazi guards never enter the barracks, making it possible to hold clandestine prayer services. Discovering this, Corrie realizes that Betsie was right to treat every circumstance, no matter how seemingly bad, as a gift from God. This episode serves to affirm Betsie's unswerving faith and shows how Corrie slowly grows towards it, despite her occasional doubts.

> And then we would hear the life-giving words passed back along the aisles in French, Polish, Russian, Czech, back into Dutch. They were little previews of heaven, these evenings beneath the light bulb. I would think of Haarlem, each substantial church set behind its wrought-iron fence and its barrier of doctrine. And I would know again that in darkness God's truth shines most clear.

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 213

Explanation and Analysis

During their time in Ravensbruck, Betsie and Corrie organize a daily prayer service in which they read the Bible aloud and prisoners take turns sharing songs or chants from their respective Christian denominations. Even though these gatherings are originally meant to imitate normal church services, Corrie eventually sees them as superior—here, she's able to see how shared worship of God transcends the differences imposed by sect, nationality, or language. Even though this is taking place among members of different Christian sects, rather than of different religions, it's important that what Corrie finds most beautiful about the service is the tolerance and respect it embodies.

Again, Corrie chooses to interpret her imprisonment as an opportunity to learn and do good. She and Betsie find a sense of purpose in leading prayers, which improves the cohesion and morale of the barracks as a whole—eventually, they conclude that this is the reason God sent them there. Moreover, by contrasting the beauty of shared prayer to the artificial divisions cultivated by different churches in Haarlem, Corrie learns a lesson about inclusion that she will put into action when she is released from prison and resumes her charitable work.

The Blue Sweater Quotes

> The knitters of Barracks 28 became the praying heart of the vast diseased body that was Ravensbruck, interceding for all the camp—guards, under Betsie's prodding, as well as prisoners. We prayed beyond the concrete walls for the healing of Germany, of Europe, of the world—as Mama had once done from the prison of a crippled body.

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker), Betsie ten Boom

Related Themes:

Page Number: 222

Explanation and Analysis

After some weeks in Ravensbruck, Corrie is released from hard labor and joins Betsie and other especially frail women knitting socks for German soldiers, a relatively easy task. Quickly finishing their quota of socks, the women spend the entire day reading from the Bible and praying. It's Betsie who encourages them to do this, rather than sinking into despair, and who encourages them to retain high moral principles, like the importance of forgiveness, despite the bleak circumstances. Corrie sees her sister's remarkable personality and ability to inspire others as an explanation for why they have been sent to this concentration camp—it helps her see her experience as purposeful, rather than characterized by meaningless suffering. It's also important

that Corrie sees their work now as a continuation of Mama's behavior many decades ago; just as she said at the beginning of the novel, the events and examples of her early life have served as God's preparation for what was to come.

The Three Visions Quotes

❝ When mention of the NSBers no longer brought a volley of self-righteous wrath, I knew the person's healing was not far away. And the day he said, "These people you spoke of—I wonder if they'd care for some homegrown carrots," then I knew the miracle had taken place.

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 247

Explanation and Analysis

After her release from Ravensbruck, Corrie returns to Haarlem and prepares a rehabilitation home outside of the city for use by refugees after the war. When people begin flocking to her in 1945, she realizes there's another population that needs help—former Nazi collaborators who are now disgraced and shunned by society. Corrie views this as a way to promote the ideals of forgiveness and reconciliation, thus honoring Betsie and continuing her legacy; however, she soon finds that traumatized and embittered refugees cannot live in peace with the people who betrayed them. Accordingly, Corrie gives up the Beje for their use. Her willingness to open her house to both sides of a terrible conflict shows her expansive sense of tolerance. It also establishes her as an example of forgiveness; she provides the same inspiration to refugees that Betsie did for her.

Her description of the refugees' slow journey towards forgiveness emphasizes not just their kindness to others but their improving mental state. As they learn to forgive, they also shift from anger to thoughtfulness. In this sense, forgiveness isn't just a good deed but also a way to achieve personal tranquility and moral growth.

❝ And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself.

Related Characters: Corrie ten Boom (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 248

Explanation and Analysis

As Corrie becomes more and more well-known as a public speaker, she begins to address people in Germany who are struggling to make sense of their wartime crimes and the current impoverished state of the country. At one such gathering, she recognizes a former S.S. guard from Ravensbruck when he comes up to shake her hand. Remembering the suffering she and Betsie endured there, she feels she can't shake her hand and forgive him; but after praying for help from Jesus, she finds her arm lifting as if by itself. Decades ago, Father told Corrie that forgiveness is a moment of interaction and closeness with God, and now she sees that Jesus has personally intervened to help her forgive. By the end of the novel, Corrie has concluded that the often difficult act of forgiveness is the best way to transcend flawed human emotions and feel an authentic connection to God.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

THE ONE HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY PARTY

Corrie wakes up eagerly, wondering if it's sunny or foggy outside her house, which she nicknames the Beje. She puts on her new maroon dress; she feels that she looks nice in the new outfit, even though she's forty-five and losing her figure. It's her sister Betsie who always looks graceful, no matter what she wears, but Corrie admires her, rather than envying her.

Corrie's ability to admire others' good qualities, rather than feeling jealous, reflects the deep humility that is inspired by her faith. For Corrie, Christianity isn't restricted to the church but permeates every aspect of daily life.

Corrie hears the doorbell ring, although it's still early in the morning. She carefully descends the steep stairs which link the many floors in her narrow, typically Dutch house. However, Betsie gets there before her and answers the door to find a young boy delivering flowers. Looking for the card, the sisters see the gift is from Pickwick, a wealthy customer who often visits the family. Pickwick is "the ugliest man in Haarlem," but he endears himself to everyone with his kindness and generosity.

Both Corrie's personal life and her future resistance work is centered around her house. This reflects her deep devotion to and reliance on her family. It also emphasizes the extent to which Corrie's fight against injustice takes place on an individual level. Her resistance work is the fruit of personal principles, not government or group action.

Betsie and Corrie carry the flowers into the shop, where Father displays his wares and performs complicated watch repairs. In the center of the room is Corrie's own bench, flanked by the workspaces of the two employees, Hans and Christoffels. At this moment, all the clocks are striking seven o'clock. Ever since she was a child, Corrie has loved to enter the room and hear their mingled chimes on the hour. And today is a special occasion, as the family is hosting a party to mark the one hundredth birthday of the watch shop.

By beginning at a moment of family celebration, the narrative emphasizes the strong cohesion that exists among the ten Booms, as well as their rootedness in the local community which will later prove invaluable as they rely on neighbors and acquaintances for resources, services, and contacts.

More and more flower deliveries arrive at the house. People throughout the city are eager to offer their respects to Father, sometimes known as "Haarlem's Grand Old Man." Betsie is especially happy to receive them; because the house is so narrow and dark, it's hard for her to cultivate a garden or even a window box of flowers.

While the ten Booms are eager to help others and generally content with their own circumstances, their old-fashioned and cramped home is a reminder that they themselves are not well off.

Soon the apprentice Hans arrives, followed by the shop saleslady, Toos. Toos has such a harsh and negative demeanor that she's almost unemployable, but Father has not only given her a job but charmed her completely.

Father's insistence on valuing each person, regardless of their flaws, will inspire his children's lifesaving work during World War II.

Corrie goes upstairs to set out plates for breakfast. For her, the dining room is the "heart of the home." She's eaten all her meals here since childhood, and as a girl used to do her homework on the table and sometimes convert it into a fort. Once the table used to be crowded at every meal, but now only Father, Corrie, and Betsie use it. Her older siblings, Willem and Nollie, have married and left home, and Mama and her aunts are dead. Father has welcomed a stream of foster children into the Beje, but they too have grown up and moved away.

This passage emphasizes Corrie's close relationship with her family, but it also shows that, with no one left to care for except Father, she's facing a moment of uncertainty and purposelessness in her life. Her work during the war isn't just invaluable to the people she helps, it's something that brings out Corrie's latent leadership abilities and gives her a sense of fulfillment in her own life.

As Betsie brings in coffee and breakfast, Father carefully descends the stairs. He prays over the meal and then compliments Betsie and Corrie on the "new styles" they are wearing, saying their mother would have loved to see them. The sisters laugh, knowing that their dresses are very conservative and, in fact, the embarrassment of their young nieces.

Father's rootedness in outdated conventions is funny; however, his refusal to adapt his principles to suit the times, especially when doing so involves condoning injustice, will be an inspiration to his daughters.

Betsie reminisces that Mama could make every day into a special occasion. Since she was friends with almost everyone in Haarlem, "especially the poor, sick, and neglected," there was always an excuse for a birthday party or celebratory meal. Caught up in memories himself, Father reminds his daughters that he was born right here, in the dining room. Since his mother had tuberculosis and communicated it to many of her babies, he was the first of his siblings to survive infancy.

While Father provides his daughters with an important moral grounding, it's Mama who shows them how to make a practical difference in the lives of others. In their teachings to their daughters, Father and Mama reinforce traditional gender norms, but these won't bind Corrie as she becomes an activist.

Stepping back from the narrative, Corrie remarks that she could never have guessed, on that happy day, what lay in store for her family. It would have been impossible to imagine Father dead and buried in an unmarked grave, or Betsie "standing naked before a roomful of men."

Corrie's remark here reflects that she's telling her story from the distance of years, and her feelings are thus colored by hindsight. However, she also creates sense of inevitability by refusing to say that there was anything she could or would have done to save Father or Betsie from their fates.

At eight-thirty, Hans and Toos come upstairs for the daily **Bible** reading. However, Father doesn't begin as Christoffels is still absent. Christoffels is an old and "wizened" man, who looked like a beggar when Corrie first met him. He'd been an itinerant clock mender for his whole life, but since that trade was going out of fashion, he offered his services to Father, who immediately hired him.

The constant presence of the Bible in family routine shows the extent to which the ten Booms' lives are centered around Christianity. To them, the Bible is not a set of abstract principles but an immediate and relevant guide to all life's problems.

Father has just begun to read when Christoffels arrives. Although he's usually dressed in tattered clothes, today he's wearing a new suit with a flashy tie. Tactfully, Father pretends not to notice anything different, greets him formally, and continues his reading.

Like Toos, Christoffels is an eccentric character whose sterling qualities are not always evident to the casual observer. Father's gentleness and respect for this elderly man reflect his deep-seated belief in the importance of tolerance of all sorts of people.

Betsie and Corrie are busy for the rest of the morning, finishing the cooking and greeting callers eager to congratulate Father. Running out of cups, Betsie sends Corrie to ask their sister Nollie for hers. She changes into an old dress and zips through the city on her bicycle. She asks herself how she could have foreseen, on that carefree morning, a day when she would stand outside Nollie's house paralyzed with fear, desperate to know what was happening inside.

Again, Corrie juxtaposes the moment of celebration with the consequences of her family's resistance work. While the comparison distresses her, the absence of regret suggests that she views both circumstances as part of God's plan for the family, and therefore doesn't have any desire to change the course of events.

Nollie gives Corrie the cups, promising to come herself when she's finished baking cookies and her children have arrived home. She reassures Corrie that she's bringing Peter, her musically gifted son and Corrie's unofficial favorite nephew. When Corrie returns, the Beje is even more crowded—the mayor of Haarlem is there, as well as the postman and several policemen from the station near the house.

The hundredth birthday party emphasizes the extent to which the family has fostered connections among the community, largely due to their religious principles. Many of these minor characters will reemerge later in the narrative, willing to provide crucial help because of a deep sense of goodwill towards the family.

After lunch, neighborhood children begin to arrive, making a beeline for Father. Children love him because he's always kind and always wearing many interesting watches. Pickwick himself arrives and sinks down into a chair. He amuses the surrounding children by pretending his enormous stomach is a table for his coffee cup.

The children's love for Father emphasizes his unbiased kindness. He takes the time to entertain them, even though they can't give him anything in return. Similarly, Father will risk himself to help Jewish refugees even though he knows they can't repay him.

Soon, Peter looks up from the piano to announce that "the competition" is here. He means Mr. Kan and Mrs. Kan, who own the watch shop across the street. More adept at business than Father, they have cheaper prices and always sell more. But Father admonishes Peter, telling him that the Kans are "colleagues." Father is so oblivious to practical concerns that he often forgets to send bills to his clients. It's Corrie who keeps the business running, managing the books and creating window displays that attract customers.

Here, Father and Corrie seem to represent opposite mindsets. Father's faith causes him to tranquilly accept any of life's developments—even the fact that his competitors are underselling him. On the other hand, Corrie's energy and drive makes her want to alter circumstances for the better. During the war, Corrie's active nature will put Father's principles into practice, while Father's imperturbable faith will provide the moral bedrock for Corrie's dangerous work.

All through the afternoon, people wander in and out of the house. The guests are rich and poor, educated and illiterate. However, to Father, everyone is alike. The secret of his universal popularity is "not that he overlooked the differences in people" but that "he didn't know they were there."

The wide variety of guests at the party reflects Father's belief that all members of society are inherently valuable and deserve respectful treatment.

Still, Corrie wonders when Willem will arrive. Although they're both grown up now, Corrie feels "a great deal of little-sister worship" for her elder brother. She feels that he has true insight into what is going on in the world. Ten years ago, he wrote his doctoral thesis on the political evil "taking root" in Germany, and people laughed at him. Now, however, Germany is a source of unease to all of Europe. Indeed, many German watchmakers with whom the ten Booms have business relationships have gone out of business recently, and Willem says this is the result of aggression against Jews.

Willem is the family's intellectual voice, and his astute grasp of events means that the family is ready to mobilize almost as soon as the Nazi threat to Dutch Jews becomes apparent. It's also important that at this point Corrie is largely deferential to her brother as the man of the family and her sole college-educated sibling. Her work will lead her to develop independence and decision-making skills, allowing her to interact with Willem as an equal regardless of her gender or educational opportunities.

Willem is a preacher of the Dutch Reformed Church, and his job is to reach out to Jews and draw them to Christianity. However, Corrie has never seen him convert a single person. Instead, he's built a nursing home for elderly Jews. In the last few months, many younger Jews have arrived from Germany to seek shelter with him; at the moment, the nursing home is so crowded that he and his family are sleeping in the corridor.

It's importance that Willem's principles of tolerance, which he has been practicing before the war, enable him to do important work during the Nazi occupation. For the ten Booms, tolerance is not an abstract idea that comes to the fore in times of trouble, but a principle that affects the direction of their entire lives.

As Corrie refills coffee cups, she asks some acquaintances if they think Germany will instigate a war. Someone suggests that the "big countries" will figure it out, and Holland doesn't need to worry. After all, the country was neutral in the last war.

This comment represents an abnegation of personal responsibility for political events, a mindset which will allow the majority of Dutch society to stand by while their Jewish neighbors are deported and killed.

Just then, Willem arrives, along with his wife Tine and their four children. He's also leading a young Jewish man, whose traditional beard has been burned off his face, leaving a large wound. Willem introduces the man in German, then informs Corrie in Dutch that the man fled Munich yesterday after being attacked by a group of teenagers. Father rises to shake the man's hand, and Corrie hurries to bring coffee and cookies.

The previous hope about Holland's ability to weather the war unaffected is immediately contradicted by Willem's guest. The man's shocking injuries suggest that the Dutch cannot be passive bystanders in Nazi persecution—they must either condone it or fight against it.

Everyone is murmuring about this man's misfortune, and Corrie hears someone predict that people who do such things will be punished, as "Germany is a civilized country." That afternoon, no one dreams that events in Germany will cast a huge shadow over Holland, and that everyone in Haarlem will be affected.

Perception of Germany as inherently "civilized" makes people blind to insidious Nazi ideology. The memoir will argue that people and countries aren't essentially good or evil—their moral makeup depends on the choices they make.

As Corrie goes to bed, she feels gripped by memory. Childhood scenes flash before her, each one urgent. Looking back on that night, she knows that memories are as important to the future as they are to the past: in fact, past experiences, "when we let God use them, become the mysterious and perfect preparation for the work He will give us to do."

Corrie's choice to interpret all of her experiences as lessons from God allows her to withstand all kinds of misfortune. However, while Corrie is able to rationalize her personal sufferings, she's never able to explain how the larger disaster of the Holocaust fits into a divine plan.

FULL TABLE

In a series of flashbacks, Corrie recalls several formative moments in her childhood. It's 1898, and she's preparing for her first day of school. Betsie scolds her for wearing torn stockings and rummages around for a more presentable outfit. Meanwhile, Nollie declares that she won't wear the ugly hat Tante Jans has bought her. Instead, she produces a tiny fur hat, which the milliner kindly gave her after seeing the unfashionable purchases made by their aunt.	*In this flashback, the sisters' different characters become apparent. Betsie, the oldest, is inherently maternal and concerned with household affairs, while Nollie is bolder and more extroverted. It's Corrie's character that remains undefined here, helping to create the sense that Corrie doesn't really come into her own until she starts working in the underground as an adult.* 
Tante Jans has been living with the family ever since her husband died. This has complicated household arrangements, as Mama's other two sisters are already living in the Beje. Tante Jans spends all day in her room writing "flaming Christian tracts" for which she's well-known across the country, and visiting with the wealthy women who support her work. She has more personal space than anyone else in the family, but this has come to seem natural to Corrie. She's always impressed by the commanding manner with which Tante Jans forces trolleys to stop in the middle of the street, rather than waiting at a station.	*Corrie genuinely loves Tante Jans; however, her aunt's approach to religion emerges as somewhat bombastic (she writes for large audiences rather than interacting with individuals) and self-centered (she has the biggest rooms even though she doesn't help run the house). By contrast, Father's faith is expressed in the moral guidance he dispenses to actual people, and the generosity Mama expresses through practical gifts to the poor like food and clothing.* 
Nollie knows that Tante Jans will protest if she wears the fur hat to school; to her, all fashionable clothes come "from the stylebook of the devil." Corrie says she should put it under her bonnet, but Nollie chides her for advocating dishonesty. Corrie shrugs and puts on her own gray hat; she doesn't care about clothes or understand why anyone else does.	*For Tante Jans, fulfilling Christian principles entails rigidity and resistance to change of any kind. However, as Corrie grows up she realizes that her idea of "Christian" behavior must change with the times. For example, during the war she has to steal and lie in order to fulfill her Christian duty to save lives.* 
What Corrie does mind is the prospect of going to school. She doesn't want to leave her comfortable home for the unknown. Suddenly, it occurs to her that she can simply refuse to go. Instead, she'll stay with Mama and help out around the house.	*Corrie's reluctance to go to school reflects her comfort and satisfaction within her family, an attribute she will retain into adulthood.* 
The sisters run downstairs to breakfast. Tante Bep chides them for being late—a former governess, she often compares her nieces' behavior to her erstwhile charges—but Father says it doesn't matter. Mama warns them quietly to be nice to Tante Jans today, as it's the anniversary of the death of a distant friend. Such things upset Tante Jans, especially since she's often preoccupied with sickness and death anyway.	*While Tante Bep and Tante Jans are beloved relatives, they make life difficult for their nieces with their self-centeredness. As she grows up, Corrie will learn from their negative example to cultivate humility and concern for the well-being of others.* 

Tante Jans appears at the door, holding a medicinal tonic she's brewed herself. As if in the middle of the discussion, she starts meditating on the uselessness of medicine, as nothing can stop the will of God. Father gently points out that medicine has "prolonged many a life," and Tante Jans launches into a long account of the last minutes of the friend whose death occurred years ago.

As an adult, Corrie will believe, just like Tante Jans, that God's will is unstoppable. However, this belief doesn't incapacitate her or encourage passivity—rather, it gives her the faith and strength to keep working even in the face of seemingly insuperable injustice.

Suddenly, Tante Jans notices Nollie's hat and begins to criticize it. Quickly, Mama wonders aloud if the cheese is spoiled. This instantly distracts Tante Jans, who is extremely concerned with spoiled food. Nollie is saved and Father starts his daily **Bible** reading. The text of today's psalm reads, "Thou art my hiding place and my shield." Corrie wonders what there could possibly be to hide from.

The title of the memoir derives from this text, which is repeated multiple times and refers to both the physical hiding place Corrie will make in her house, and the moral comfort that a strong faith provides—ultimately emphasizing the strong relevance of Biblical texts to individual spirituality and the tangible events of the world.

After breakfast Betsie and Nollie hurry out the door, but Corrie lingers until Mama gently tells her to hurry up. Corrie announces bravely that she's not going. All of her aunts begin to give their opinions on this statement at once, but Father grandly says that he will walk her himself. Corrie clings to the railing in front of the house, but Father gently disengages her fingers and totes her away to school.

While Corrie loves her mother and aunts, it's Father who provides her with spiritual comfort and strength at important moments. While this pattern enforces gender norms that establish Father as the moral center of the family, it's also important to note that he's an involved and devoted parent who takes an active role in childrearing.

During the summer, Corrie accompanies Father on his weekly trips into Amsterdam, where he gets the precise time from the Naval Observatory clock. She loves the train trip and the beautiful landscape views it affords. When they arrive in Amsterdam, Father usually spends the morning visiting with various wholesalers, many of whom are Jews. After a quick business discussion Father brings out his **Bible** and the wholesaler produces his prayer cap and scroll; the two men spend the rest of the morning arguing and studying together, sharing their mutual love of the Scriptures. At the end of the discussion, their host always produces a delicious and exotic dessert for Corrie.

This memory emphasizes Father's longstanding belief in religious tolerance and his recognition of inherent commonalities, rather than difference, between religious groups. Although Father is intensely Christian, he doesn't use religion as a mechanism for discrimination or oppression. This passage also emphasizes the role of Biblical texts as a link between Jews and Christians, rather than something that sets them apart.

Afterwards, Father and Corrie watch the naval clock strike twelve; Father records the time on his pocket watch, so that he can make sure all the clocks at home are accurate to the second. On the way home, they talk about all different things. Once, Corrie asks Father the meaning of the word "sexsin," a word she's encountered in a poem at school. Father tells her that, just as he wouldn't ask her to carry his heavy briefcase home, he wouldn't ask her to carry knowledge that is too "heavy" for her. Corrie is satisfied with this answer, content to leave all hard questions for Father's contemplation.

Corrie will frequently return to the idea that God personally intervenes in people's lives to provide strength in difficult moments. In this light, she can view misfortune or suffering not as arguments against the existence of God but as proof of His essential goodness, and opportunities to feel close to the divine through moments of personal connection.

In the evenings, guests frequently visit the Beje, bringing instruments and performing impromptu concerts. When there's an official concert, the family, too poor to afford tickets, stands in the alley outside the stage door, where they can hear everything. The best nights come when there's a concert at the cathedral. The friendly sexton always lets them sit inside his private entrance, where they can hear the beautiful organ.

Although their relative poverty prevents them from going to the theater, in another sense they allow the ten Booms to make more connections within the community. Lack of financial resources leads to a wealth of interpersonal resources.

Corrie remembers an expedition to see one of the poor families to whom Mama regularly provides food and aid. The night before, one of their babies has died, and Mama is bringing them fresh bread, even though her chronic illness means that she can barely climb the stairs without help. While Mama consoles the young mother, Corrie stares at the dead baby, laid out in its crib. She's surprised to find that its hand is cold to the touch, and it strikes her that death could happen to anyone, even someone in her family.

With her charitable visits to the city's poor, Mama models the active Christianity that will characterize the rest of Corrie's life. Clearly, Mama considers it more important for Corrie to develop a sense of responsibility towards others than to shield her from unpleasant realities, like the dead child.

That night, Corrie starts sobbing as soon as it's time to go to bed, wailing that she doesn't want Father to die. Father hugs Corrie and tells her that, just as he gives her a train ticket right before she gets on the train, God gives people strength to handle misfortune right when they need it. Until then, he says, she shouldn't worry.

Father's moral analogies often concern the ability of God to intervene in individual lives at exactly the right moment. Corrie's belief in this principle will sustain her though many of the misfortunes she endures as an adult.

KAREL

As a teenager, Corrie is attending one of Mama's impromptu parties when she meets Karel, one of Willem's friends from seminary. She takes one look at him and falls in love. She's content just to look at him, even though he doesn't seem to notice her. A plain and shy girl, she's used to being ignored, while graceful Nollie receives all the male attention.

Even though Corrie feels secondary compared to Nollie, it's important that she doesn't resent her sister. Her acceptance of her own personal lot is an important cornerstone of her faith.

Two years later, Corrie and Nollie travel to Willem's university to visit. His friends soon arrive at his apartment, Karel among them. Corrie is surprised and thrilled to see that he remembers her, even after such a long time. Although she feels out of place in the grown-up conversation, he takes pains to include her, asking what she wants to do when she grows up.

In a sense, Karel mirrors the kindliness that Corrie associates with Father, making sure to give Corrie special attention even though she's the youngest and most insecure member of the group.

After graduating secondary school, Corrie takes over the work of the household. Her presence is especially important because Tante Bep has contracted tuberculosis and Tante Anna, who normally runs the household, is nursing her around the clock. To avoid contagion, no one else in the family is allowed inside Tante Bep's room. Corrie loves the work, but she's often struck by regret for Bep's "disgruntled and disappointed" life—she spent her entire adulthood serving in the houses of rich people, and by the mementos and photos that she prizes it seems to Corrie that she wishes she was still there.

Tante Bep's life forms a sort of contrast with Corrie's. Although both spend their lives doing lowly work within the domestic sphere and neither marry, Bep's life is less satisfying because she spends it in servitude to wealthy people. In contrast, even though her material circumstances are little different, Corrie finds greater fulfillment because she's actively aiding vulnerable people.

One day, Corrie brings up this thought with Mama, who herself is often sick and bedridden. Even so, she never pities her life but spends her time writing cheerful letters to "shut-ins all over Haarlem,"— never seeming to notice that she herself is basically a shut-in. Mama points out to Corrie that Bep is unhappy wherever she is. She only praises her former employers so highly because she's no longer with them. Mama reminds Corrie that happiness isn't dependent on one's surroundings, but rather "something we make inside ourselves."

In her remark about happiness, Mama is talking not just about Bep but herself—even though she's incapacitated by illness, she doesn't let this affect her demeanor or her sense of responsibility towards others. Later, when she's imprisoned in concentration camps, Corrie will draw strength from the idea that happiness is dependent on the individual rather than the circumstances.

Soon, Tante Bep dies. Mama and Tante Anna deal with their sadness by redoubling their charitable efforts, and Tante Jans responds by dwelling on the possibility of death even more than before. A few years after this, the young family doctor diagnoses Tante Jans with diabetes—in those days, a fatal disease. Tante Jans immediately takes to her bed, but then surprises the family by getting up the next day and redoubling her writing efforts and devoting herself to the religious clubs she organizes.

The family doesn't expect that Tante Jans will have the strength to deal with her diagnosis, especially since it exacerbates her lifelong fear of illness. Her startling ability to do so reflects their belief that God helps people confront misfortune by endowing them with new fortitude.

Each week, a complicated test must be run to analyze Tante Jans's blood sugar. To save the expense of doctor's visits, Corrie learns to perform the test herself with the help of the doctor's sister and nurse, Tine. While she gets used to this task, Willem returns home from university; his presence cheers everyone, as does his pleasant voice as he reads aloud after dinner. As he's doing this one day, the doorbell rings and Corrie runs downstairs to see Tine, bringing some flowers for Mama. Guided by a sudden instinct and inspired by the romantic novels she loves, Corrie insists that Tine bring the flowers into the parlor herself. She's gratified to see Willem look at her "as though there were not another soul in the room."

Tine is a fairly minor character, but the competence she models as a nurse and her role caring for others align her with the ten Booms' ethos and principles. It's also interesting that Willem's romantic attachments spring from previous family connections—this reinforces the sense that the ten Booms are deeply integrated into their community and eager to welcome new people into their family.

Two months after Willem's ordination, he and Tine get married. Corrie is especially excited because she knows Karel will be there and see her in her new silk dress and intricate hairdo. When she finally greets him, he enchants her by remarking on how grown-up and "lovely" she is.

This is one of the few moments in which Corrie cares about clothes or appearances, but it's clear that she does so only because they reflect her heightened emotional state.

Months later, Corrie is devastated to see that Tante Jans's weekly blood test has come out badly. Corrie runs to the doctor and he confirms that Jans has three weeks to live at most. After a brief conference, the family goes to Tante Jans and breaks the news gently. They attempt to comfort her by reminding her how much she's accomplished, but Tante Jans just breaks into tears and whispers that the only true accomplishment is Jesus's death on the cross, and that "all we need in life or death is to be sure of this." Corrie feels that she's witnessed a "mystery" in Tante Jans's ability to accept such a long-feared event so bravely.

Here, Tante Jans models Father's long-expressed belief that God gives people strength when they need it most. She also expresses more humility than ever before—while she's always been proud and even self-important about her work, now she understands that the only important thing in life is one's faith. Even though her impending death is a tragedy, it's also a moment of great moral strength and connection to the divine.

Four months after Tante Jans's death, the family travels to watch Willem's first sermon—a huge milestone and point of pride in the Dutch Reformed Church. Friends and family converge on Willem's parish and stay for days, including Karel. As soon as he arrives at Willem and Tine's house, he takes Corrie on a long walk. This becomes their daily custom, and they discuss their future plans, talking about a shared life even though Karel has not explicitly mentioned marriage.

It's important to note that while Willem's life centers around his blossoming career as a minister, the only path out of the house for Corrie is through marriage. The distinctions between gender among which she grows up limit her options and make her dependent on her attractiveness to potential suitors like Karel.

One morning, Willem corners Corrie and gently tells her that if Karel has implied that he's serious about her, he's leading her on. Karel's family is determined that he marry a wealthy woman, and he has resigned himself to fulfilling their wishes. Willem knows he will never go against them, not even for her. Corrie hastily ends the conversation and tells herself that Willem doesn't understand romantic affairs and that things will certainly work out.

Although Corrie is herself a young adult, Karel has all the power in this situation because it's socially unacceptable for Corrie, a woman, to express her feelings or desire for marriage first. This gender divide allows Karel to indulge his feelings for her without entangling himself with a woman of insufficient fortune.

Soon after this, Karel returns to his own parish, but not before urgently pleading with Corrie to write him every day about events at the Beje. Corrie writes often, but his letters arrive infrequently. One afternoon months later, Karel visits the Beje without warning, bringing a young woman he introduces as his fiancée. Corrie feels like she's in shock, but she manages to bring him upstairs and sit through the visit as if nothing is wrong. As soon as he leaves, she runs to her room, sobbing.

It's clear that Karel is torn between his attraction to the lifestyle at the Beje and his desire for greater wealth and social status. Despite Corrie's attraction to Karel, the worldly ambitions that he has and she lacks make it unlikely that they would be suitable partners.

After some time, Corrie hears Father climbing the stairs. She's afraid he will comfort her with some platitude about finding someone else, even though she knows Karel is the only love of her life. Instead, he tells her that when love is "blocked," one must choose whether to kill it, and thus kill part of oneself as well, or to "ask God to open up another route for that love to travel." He says that if Corrie asks God, he will give her his "perfect" love, a love she wouldn't be able to feel by herself.

Father is basically saying that Corrie can either remain angry at Karel, thus corrupting the original love which brought her such joy, or, with God's help, forgive him and eventually feel a purer and more satisfying form of love. This argument forms the bedrock of Corrie's later beliefs about the importance of forgiveness, which she argues is not just a good deed but of personal benefit to the forgiver as well.

Listening to Father, Corrie doesn't yet know that this advice will sustain her through far more drastic situations, in moments where "there was not, on a human level, anything to love at all."

Stepping back from her narrative for a moment, Corrie emphasizes the fact that her family life, and the religious teachings she learned as a child, influence and enable her later work.

For now, Corrie tries to get over her feelings for Karel "without giving up the joy and wonder that had grown with it." She prays fervently for God to allow her to see Karel as He does, and falls asleep.

By overcoming her feelings of anger or hurt, Corrie is not just practicing kindness towards Karel but becoming closer to God.

THE WATCH SHOP

One morning, Corrie is washing the windows while Mama peels potatoes. Suddenly, she notices that the water has run over the edge of the sink, and sees that Mama seems paralyzed. She keeps repeating Corrie's name over and over again; Corrie puts her to bed and fetches Father and Betsie, but Mama is suffering an unstoppable cerebral hemorrhage.

Although Mama has been sick for much of her life, this is a touchstone event for Corrie—with her mother fully incapacitated she has to take more practical and moral responsibility for her household.

Fro two months Mama lays in a coma on the bed. One morning, she wakes up unexpectedly. Eventually she regains the use of her arms and legs, but she can't knit or write letters. The only words she can say are "yes," "no," and "Corrie." Whenever she wants to say something, Corrie has to guess what it is by asking Mama yes-or-no questions.

Without the use of her arms and legs, Mama is basically imprisoned in her own body—but she doesn't let this affect her kindly demeanor or tranquil faith. Her behavior now inspires Corrie and Betsie when they face a more formal kind of imprisonment.

However, Mama continues to interact with the world and help people. She often sees people she knows from the window and, remembering a birthday or other special event, instructs Corrie to write a note. Even though she can't express love as she's done before—with food baskets and knitted presents—her love is still "as whole as before."

Mama's continued concern for others shows that one doesn't have to be healthy or fortunate in order to feel a sense of duty and communal responsibility. Throughout the novel Corrie will continue to feel compassion towards others regardless of her personal circumstances.

While attending teaching school, Nollie meets and becomes engaged to a fellow student, Flip van Woerden. On the day of the wedding, Corrie is struck by how young and healthy Mama looks, despite all her ailments. As Nollie walks down the aisle, Corrie recalls her old dreams of marriage to Karel. She knows that by now she's too old to get married; like Betsie, who has pernicious anemia and has vowed to remain single, she will remain at the Beje her entire life.

An implicit tragedy here is that Corrie can only leave home through marriage—she has no other options through which to develop skills or pursue a career. Ironically, it's the injustice of the occupation which will give her the work and responsibilities for which she so clearly has a capacity.

Rather than feeling sad, Corrie is cheered up by this thought. At this moment, she knows that God has "accepted the faltering gift of my emotions," because she's able to think of Karel with sincere love and no anger. She prays for him and his wife, knowing that she could never have accessed these feelings alone.

Even though Corrie has done a good deed by forgiving Karel, she doesn't ascribe this to her own inherent goodness, but rather to the presence of God in her daily life. For Corrie, practicing forgiveness doesn't lead to self-adulation or sanctimony.

As the congregation sings the final hymn, Mama suddenly starts singing perfectly, even though she hasn't spoken for months. Corrie is deeply moved and hopes this is the beginning of Mama's recovery, but she never speaks again. Four weeks later, Mama dies.

Mama's sudden singing is a sort of miracle, marking her feelings of fulfillment in the young adults she's successfully raised. In another sense, it marks Corrie's pure feelings towards Karel—it's only when she moves past human flaws like jealousy or anger that she can witness and appreciate divine moments like this.

A month later, Betsie gets a nasty cold. While she's in bed, Corrie takes over her duties in the watch shop. Frustrated by the lack of tidy records and Father's indifference to business matters, Corrie takes it upon herself to devise a system, and realizes she loves the work. Meanwhile, Betsie starts to do small household tasks as she recovers. Eventually, the sisters realize that while Corrie is an indifferent housekeeper, Betsie truly loves household tasks. Switching roles, they realize that Betsie can stretch a food budget, improve the house, and make meals for the poor just as Mama did.

Although Corrie has enjoyed running her house and values the labor it involves, it's Betsie who is truly gifted. Corrie's decision to work in the watch shop isn't a dismissal of domestic work; rather, it reflects her sense that such work is important and requires skills she doesn't have. Betsie's adept household management will later make it possible to accommodate multiple Jewish fugitives in the Beje.

On the other hand, Corrie finds a new sense of purpose in the shop. She enrolls in a watchmaking program and eventually becomes the first certified female watchmaker in Holland. For the next twenty years Father, Corrie, and Betsie live in this comfortable pattern.

As a woman Corrie can't move out of her house; however, she's actually able to find a fulfilling occupation within the domestic sphere and without tying herself to a husband. Paradoxically, Corrie's upbringing both reinforces and subverts gender norms.

The shop is busy not just with customers but visitors who come to chat or seek advice from Father, who prays for guidance from God. Corrie tries to emulate Betsie's habit of learning details about every visitor, and she's happy when people say that she's like her sister.

Corrie views the kindness she displays not as an inherent trait but a conscious moral choice. This reflects her belief that people aren't essentially good or evil, but rather defined by the attributes they cultivate in themselves.

In the 1920s, the ten Booms take in a series of foster children. Meanwhile, Nollie and Willem are having their own children, so the Beje is full of young people. Nollie's son Peter especially spends a lot of time there, playing on their piano. One day, the family is listening to a concert on the radio that Father's friends have bought him when Peter notices that the radio piano is slightly out of tune. Testing him, Father realizes that Peter has perfect pitch. The gift of the radio also means that Father no longer has to travel to Amsterdam to get the precise time—they can hear it from Big Ben on the BBC.

The radio reflects the positive effects of modernity on the ten Booms' life. They no longer have to crowd outside theaters to hear concerts, as they can listen in their own home, and it's no longer so difficult for Father to maintain the precise time. However, the passage of time also creates an implicit tragedy—with the new ubiquity of information like the precise time, Father's work is no longer so important or central to the community.

Every day Father and Corrie take a walk at the same time, during the shop's midday break. They always see the same people, and their favorite is a man they nickname the Bulldog, for the two pets whose facial features are similar to his own. They're touched by his tender affection for the dogs, and always wave to him as they pass.

The fixed nature of Father and Corrie's daily routines reflects their deep rootedness in the community and their traditional way of life. However, once the war begins they will prove surprisingly adaptable to their new circumstances.

However, throughout these years Germany is preparing for war. The family hears about it on the radio, but it's hard to take the threat seriously. Only Willem, with his connections to the Jewish community, is steadily preoccupied.

Corrie's placid contentment with her life contrasts jarringly with the increasing threat of war. This passage emphasizes the extent to which politics overlap with and intrude on personal lives.

During this time, a young German watchmaker named Otto travels to be Father's apprentice. He brags about being part of the Hitler Youth, constantly talks about how much better Germany is than Holland, and calls Father's **Old Testament** "the Jews' Book of Lies." One morning his landlady comes to the shop and tells them that Otto has been keeping a huge knife under his pillow. Father tries to interpret these events in the most charitable way, saying that Otto is alone in a strange country and must be frightened and lonely.

Through Otto, the ten Booms encounter Nazi ideology for the first time. It's important that Nazi ideas emerge as a threat not just to vulnerable groups but to justice and truth as a whole, as embodied by the Bible Otto reviles. The apprentice's troubling behavior contradicts the complacent remarks of guests at the hundredth birthday party about Germany's status as a "civilized" country.

In particular, Corrie is struck by Otto's "brusqueness" towards their employee Christoffels. She feels that he deserves respect on account of his age and seniority, but Otto never lets him go by first or helps him with his tools. Willem explains that Nazi Germany encourages people to disrespect the old, who "have no value to the State." According to him, Otto only respects Father because he owns a business and has authority.

Nazi Germany encourages intolerance not just towards minority groups like Jews but wide swaths of society. In this sense, religious intolerance is not something that empowers the majority but, in the long run, functions to everyone's detriment.

One morning, Christoffels stumbles into the house with a bleeding cheek. Otto has shoved the older man in the street and pushed his face against a brick wall. As it turns out, the apprentice has been kicking and tormenting the older man for months, but he's been too proud to complain. Father attempts to plead with Otto, but as the apprentice shows no remorse, he's forced to fire him.

Christoffels's innate dignity contrasts sharply with Otto's viciousness—the character of someone reviled by the Nazi state emerges as stronger than that of the person it endorses.

INVASION

One night, the family gathers around the radio, waiting to hear the prime minister address the nation on the possibility of war with Germany. The prime minister assures everyone that Germany will respect Holland's neutrality, but Father shuts off the radio, saying that war will surely come and it's wrong to give people false hope. Corrie is astonished to hear Father, always an optimist, say such a thing.

The prime minister's political posturing turns out to be utterly false, while Father's intuitions are sound. Throughout the novel Father is notably able to discern the truth in complicated situations—a reflection of his commitment to the Bible and the eternal truth which, in his eyes, it contains.

That night Corrie wakes up to the sound of explosions. She finds Betsie and they pray together for Holland and the Queen. Betsie even prays for the German soldiers, but Corrie feels that she "cannot pray for those men at all."

Throughout the novel Corrie will admire and emulate Betsie's ability to forgive people even as they are actively harming her.

As she's praying, Corrie has a strange dream. She's in the large market and sees an old cart roll across the square. She herself is inside it, alongside Father, Betsie, Willem, Peter, and family friends like Pickwick and Toos. She feels that they should get off the wagon, but she doesn't know what to do. She wakes up unsettled, and Betsie makes her a pot of coffee. To comfort Corrie, she says that God shows people the bad things that are coming to "tell us that this too is in His hands."

Corrie's dream uncannily predicts the circumstances of her eventual arrest many chapters later. One of Corrie's concerns is explaining how God allows misfortune to befall people like her, who are doing the right thing. Mediating this experience through the dream allows her to see it as part of a greater plan, rather than a random catastrophe.

Holland holds out against Germany for five days. Everyone tapes up their windows and helps neighbors do the same, forgetting about the petty disputes which seemed important before the war. People take to walking in the streets more than usual, even Father. One morning, Corrie and Father are in a large crowd on a bridge when word comes that Holland has surrendered. A teenage boy next to them bursts into tears, saying aloud that he wishes he could have fought. Father picks up a bruised flower from the pavement; placing in the boy's buttonhole, he says that "Holland's battle has just begun."

While Father's faith makes him resigned to personal suffering—for example, he never complains that his watch business isn't very profitable or that his wife is ill—it also gives him courage to take action on greater moral issues. His declaration that the young boy must be ready for "battle" is a reflection of the importance of social action in practicing his faith.

In the first months of German occupation, little changes. The ten Booms have to get used to a curfew and ration cards, as well as the constant presence of German soldiers in the streets. More importantly, the newspapers only carry German propaganda and fake news. Everyone is ordered to turn in private radio sets, but the ten Booms decide to keep one of theirs, which Peter resourcefully hides under the staircase. When Corrie turns in the other set, the German clerk asks if any of her family members own radios, and she says they don't. It's the first lie she's ever told. Because of Corrie's deception, every night the family listens to English broadcasts, which tell the real news.

The newspapers, which are fallible and vulnerable to malevolent manipulation, contrast with the Bible, whose truths are eternal and unchanging. At the beginning of the novel Corrie makes a clear distinction between the moral advice provided by the Bible and practical information gleaned from modern news sources. However, during her imprisonment she will conclude that the Bible is of as much day-to-day relevance as a newspaper or radio.

Many nights, Corrie lies awake listening to German planes flying west or even exchanging fire right over the city. Unable to sleep one night, she goes downstairs to have a cup of tea with Betsie. After an hour of chatting, she returns upstairs. On her pillow is a large piece of shrapnel which has broken her window. Corrie is horrified by the knowledge that, had she been asleep, she would have died. Betsie, bandaging her hand, reminds her that "there are no 'ifs' in God's world," and starts praying aloud.

Corrie is tempted to think of this episode as a random and terrifying piece of luck, but Betsie reminds her that God is involved in each individual occurrence. Conceiving of every such incident as the work of God, and therefore a good thing, allows them to remain stoic in the face of great personal misfortune.

Slowly, the family realizes that the "true horror" of the occupation is the persecution of Jews, which is slowly increasing. For the first year, this is demonstrated only through some anti-Semitic graffiti and isolated vandalism of Jewish stores. However, more and more people are starting to join the NSB, the Dutch Nazi organization. Some just want the privileges and increased rations that come with the membership, but some want to act on their latent anti-Semitism. On their walks, Corrie and Father see more and more signs barring Jews from restaurants and public places. They see people wearing the yellow star—including their long acquaintance, the man they call the Bulldog.

Corrie always took for granted that she lived in a fairly tolerant and diverse society, but now she sees how fragile that tolerance really is. It's important that she frames the decline of tolerance as a series of small personal choices. Rather than blaming it on Nazi commanders or abstract ideology, she points out that every Dutch person who chooses increased rations over principle weakens the social fabric and incurs responsibility for the ensuing catastrophe.


Worst of all, some people are being deported or simply disappearing. Mr. Kan's watch shop across the street simply stops opening one day and an NSB family takes over his apartment. Sometimes arrests even take place in public. One day Father and Corrie see German soldiers piling several Jewish families into trucks in the middle of the market. Corrie cries out in dismay for "the poor people," and Father echoes her—but she realizes he's actually looking at German soldiers who, he says, "have touched the apple of God's eye."

Like Betsie, Father is often as preoccupied with the German soldiers committing crimes as he is with their victims. This shows that to him, one's fate on Earth is not as important as the judgment that awaits after death.

Father, Betsie, and Corrie begin to discuss what they can do to help Jewish friends. Already Willem is finding hiding places for the young Jews living at his house. She has to put her ideas into action one morning in 1941, when she sees a group of German soldiers march by the Beje and demolish Weil's furriers, across the street. Corrie and Betsie rush outside to help Mr. Weil gather up his possessions and bustle him inside the Beje before the soldiers notice his absence. They need to contact Mrs. Weil, who is visiting her sister, and warn her not to come home, but all private telephones have been disconnected and public calls are monitored.

Corrie presents the first moment in which she's called to action as a seemingly isolated incident, like an incident later in this chapter when she visits a Jewish doctor and suddenly understands the danger he is facing. Corrie describes the development of her activism not as a result of exceptional character but a series of moral choices, suggesting both that anyone can and that everyone should commit to fighting injustice as she does.


Corrie hurries out to Willem's house, where she finds Tine and their adult son Kik and gives them the Amsterdam address of Mrs. Weil's sister. That night, Kik comes to the Beje just before curfew and leads Mr. Weil away. Weeks later, when Corrie asks Kik what happened, he grins and says that "if you're going to work with the underground, Tante Corrie," she can't ask any questions. Corrie has never considered herself as part of the "underground"—to her, the word is associated with sinful things, like stealing and killing people. Now, she wonders if such activities are what God wants right now. She doesn't know how exactly to follow Christian tenets "when evil was in power."

While the impulse to support vulnerable and needy people springs directly from her Christian principles, the tactics she will have to adopt seem to contrast with those principles. Corrie has to grapple with the fact that fulfilling God's will involves doing things that she would normally regard as sinful in God's eyes. Through dilemmas like these, Corrie comes to conceive of her faith as an adaptable guide to modern circumstances, rather than a set of rigid rules.

A month later, Father and Corrie are on their usual walk when they spot The Bulldog—except he's no longer accompanied by his dogs. Intrigued, they follow him home to a small secondhand shop and, at the door, introduce themselves. The man turns out to be named Harry de Vries. When Father asks after the bulldogs, Harry sadly confesses that he has poisoned them, since he knows that the Germans could come for him at any time, and he can't stand the thought of his dogs being left behind to die.

For Harry, the bulldogs are like family, and his decision to put them to sleep lest they face a worse fate reflects the ubiquity of hard choices that the ten Booms will face as they become more involved in the resistance but also try to keep their family intact—for example, Willem must reconcile his sons' wish to work in the underground with his own desire for their personal safety.

Struck with sympathy, Father offers to accompany Harry on his daily walks. The other man refuses, saying that to do so would put the ten Boom family in danger, but he accepts an invitation to visit them after dark. Soon, Harry and his non-Jewish wife Cato are regular visitors at the Beje. Harry converted to Christianity years earlier, but he still embraces his Jewish identity, calling himself "a completed Jew" and "a follower of one perfect Jew." He's especially fascinated by the valuable Jewish theological tomes with which a rabbi entrusted Father shortly before his own deportation.

It's clear that Father forms a special relationship with Harry because he's an ethnic Jew who espouses Christian principles. Harry's phrase "a completed Jew" is somewhat belittling to Judaism—after all, most Jews are not followers of Jesus, but this does not make them less whole or their religious beliefs less valid.

Corrie reflects that during this time it's the "small, almost unconscious" episodes that mark "a turning point" in her life. She's begun to pick up and drop off work for the shop's Jewish customers, so that they don't have to go out in the street. One evening, she's visiting a customer and his family when a child runs downstairs, protesting that her father hasn't tucked her in. The father cheerfully goes upstairs to play hide-and-seek, and Corrie suddenly reflects that these people could be forced onto a truck at any moment. She prays silently, telling Jesus that "I offer myself for Your people." Once again, she remembers the waking dream in which she saw herself and her family passing through the market in a wagon, heading towards an uncertain destination.

In this moment, Corrie realizes the essential humanity in the Jewish family—to her, they represent the universal bonds of love that bind parents and children. This humanity, combined with her awareness of their particular danger, is what convinces her of the need to ensure religious tolerance at all costs. It's also important that, just like when she helps Mr. Weil, she presents this declaration of commitment in the context of a specific moment and explicit choice—again, she implies that this is a situation anyone could face, and to which anyone must be ready to respond.

THE SECRET ROOM

It's 1942, two years after the fall of Holland. Every month a new restriction appears—the latest is a prohibition on singing the Wilhelmus, the Dutch national anthem. One Sunday, the family visits a church where Peter has been hired as organist. At the end of the service, Peter proudly and suddenly plays the Wilhelmus. Led by Father, everyone stands, and people spontaneously begin singing the words.

It's important that the Wilhelmus, while a symbol of Dutch national pride, represents an inclusive and moderate society to Peter and the ten Booms. By contrast, Nazi slogans like the ones Otto spouts are indicators of pernicious, all-consuming nationalism.

Corrie is caught up in the emotion, but afterwards she's angry with Peter for risking his safety and that of his family. Already, Nollie and Flip are hiding two Jewish women in their house, and Peter's actions increase the likelihood of Gestapo scrutiny. Two days later, just as Corrie begins to stop worrying about him, one of Peter's siblings bursts into the Beje and announces that the Gestapo has taken Peter to the federal prison in Amsterdam.

Corrie is already emerging as one of her family's strongest minds. While she always turns to Father for moral guidance, it's she who can put his principles into action most efficiently and safely.

A few weeks later, a stranger arrives at the Beje in the evening. She introduces herself as Mrs. Kleermaker, a Jew. Her husband was arrested some time ago, the Gestapo has just ordered her to close her clothing store, and she's afraid to go home to her apartment. Betsie eagerly offers her one of the Beje's spare rooms and even invites her to help in the kitchen, over which she's normally extremely protective.

The elderly woman's arrival and Corrie's humble offer of help frame her activism in a surprisingly quotidian way, emphasizing the universality of her actions.

A few nights later, the same thing happens again: an elderly couple arrives at the house, clutching their few possessions and seeking sanctuary. Corrie knows she needs to find a permanent place for these people, somewhere safer than the Beje, which is a block away from the police headquarters.

Even though she's currently the youngest resident at the Beje, Corrie immediately emerges as the family's decision-maker. Becoming an activist allows her to take on the leadership role to which she seems very suited.

Corrie visits Willem to ask for advice. He seems stressed and tired, and his beard is turning white. He says that it's harder and harder to place people because most safe houses won't accept anyone who doesn't have a ration card, and Jews are not issued ration cards. Corrie asks how he solves this dilemma, and Willem astounds her by casually saying that one has to steal them.

Given Corrie's initial hesitance to associate herself with the underground due to its dubious reputation, Willem's offhand admission that he's been stealing is astonishing. However, her older brother's example shows her that it's acceptable to bend earthly rules in order to fulfill God's greater will.

Corrie asks Willem if he can help her get three ration cards, but he says he's already being watched. Anyway, it's best if she develops her own connections. Corrie decides to visit a family friend, Fred Koornstra, who works at the Food Office. Corrie knows the man because for many years she's conducted church services for mentally disabled children, of whom Fred's daughter is one.

The wealth of family contacts on which Corrie can draw is already becoming apparent. She's able to do her wartime work because of her family's long history not just of generosity and friendliness but its specific acts of tolerance, like Corrie's program for disabled and probably marginalized children.


Praying that Fred won't turn her in, Corrie visits him one night and tells him gravely that there are three Jews staying at her house and she needs to find them ration cards. Fred says that he can't give away ration cards, as they are closely watched, but then he comes up with a scheme: he and a friend will fake a break-in, arranging to have themselves tied up in the office to avoid suspicion. Fred asks Corrie how many ration cards she needs, and she astonishes herself by replying, "one hundred."

Even though Corrie doesn't explicitly think of herself as an activist or a member of the underground, in high-pressure situations she always acts as if she is. Corrie will interpret her new capability as a sign of God's approval and intervention, but it also reflects the latent character traits she hasn't cultivated until now.


A week later, Fred arrives at the Beje. He has two black eyes from the "burglary." He brings with him the hundred cards, as well as a "continuing coupon" from each one that will allow him to legally issue Corrie replacements. They arrange that he will make this delivery every month, dressed up as a meterman. Corrie hides the ration cards under a stair, reflecting that Peter did the same thing with the radio and feeling that he would be proud of her.

Corrie has devised a system of deception and fraud, actions on which she would normally frown. However, because these "sins" help fulfill a greater good, she eventually concludes that they are acceptable to God. This will later put her in opposition to Nollie, who believes that religious law must be strictly obeyed even in times of crisis.

By now, Mrs. Kleermaker and the elderly couple have moved on to safer locations, but other people continue to arrive, each with their own predicament. For example, pregnant women need to deliver their babies, and Jews who die in hiding must be buried. Willem encourages Corrie to find her own resources, but she realizes she already has them because she's already "friends with half of Haarlem." It's easy to think of trustworthy people in every sector, from maternity nurses to strategically placed clerks. Corrie is sure that God is guiding her at every step.

Corrie attributes her initial good fortune directly to God, although it may actually seem due to her family's generosity and the goodwill they've engendered over years. However, given that this behavior springs from their religious faith and that Corrie believes every event is inspired by God, it is logical for her to view their entire lives as part of God's preparation for this situation.

One night the doorbell rings and Corrie runs downstairs, expecting another refugee. Instead, it's Willem's son Kik; he tells her to get her bicycle and come with him, even though it's after curfew. After a long ride, they stop at a large suburban house, where a maid opens the door. Inside, Corrie immediately sees Pickwick, who leads her into a room filled with distinguished people drinking real coffee, which is now a rarity.

This is Corrie's first moment of connection with the real underground. The secrecy of its meetings and the presence of wealthy people with houses and money at their disposal contrasts with Corrie's more humble operation, which functions despite her relative lack of resources or experience.

As Pickwick takes her around the room making introductions, referring to each person as "Mr. or Mrs. Smit," Corrie realizes that she's at a meeting of the national underground. She learns that most of their work involves communicating with English and Free Dutch forces and rescuing downed Allied planes. However, they're all sympathetic to Corrie's local work and put their resources at her disposal: false identity papers, cars with official plates, forgers.

Moments like this make it seem as though all Dutch society, and especially the elite, mobilized against the Germans. In fact, this was not true—many government officials and the entire royal family fled before the Germans arrived, and despite the efforts of the resistance 75% of Dutch Jews were murdered during the Holocaust.

One man, a well-known architect, informs Corrie that he will pay her a visit and construct a secret room in her house, which will help minimize the danger to everyone in her work. Just as she and Kik are preparing to leave, Pickwick tells them he's learned that Peter will soon be released. Indeed, three weeks later an emaciated and tired Peter returns home.

Peter's early imprisonment, though short, is a reminder of the stakes looming over the family as they begin a coordinated effort to hide Jews.


One morning, the architect arrives at the store and introduces himself as "Mr. Smit." Father is eager to ascertain if this man is related to any of the other Smits he knows, and Corrie has to explain with difficulty that this isn't the man's real name. Mr. Smit approves of the hiding place for the ration cards; as he surveys the Beje's oddly placed stairs and crooked walls, he laughs—its haphazard construction means that installing a secret room will be easy. He settles on Corrie's bedroom for the room's location.

Father is trying to place this man among his prewar family connections, but this Mr. Smit actually fits into a new network, that of Corrie's underground contacts. This moment emphasizes how Corrie's underground work mirrors and sometimes overlaps with Father's charitable efforts in days gone by.

Over the next few days, workmen come to the Beje without warning, carrying hidden tools and materials. Six days later, Corrie finally gets to see the finished product—Mr. Smit has not only created a false wall, but he's mimicked the stained and grimy paint of the existing wall so it's impossible to tell that anything has been changed. Mr. Smit says that "unofficial" residents should keep everything they own inside, in case of sudden Gestapo visits. He claims that the Gestapo could search for a year without uncovering this secret room.

The installation of a physical hiding place recalls Father's earlier reading of a psalm which says that God is "a hiding place" for people in need. The connections between the tangible room and the intangible text shows how Corrie's worldly activism springs from her spiritual convictions.

EUSIE

Although Peter has returned home, he's still not safe—German soldiers have developed a practice of grabbing healthy young men in the street or even their homes and deporting them to munitions factories, which are short on labor. Nollie has created a hiding place by arranging her kitchen table over a trap door in the basement. One night, Corrie, Father and Betsie are visiting for Flip's birthday when the children run inside, saying that soldiers are two doors away. Just as the soldiers arrive, Peter scrambles down and Corrie drapes a cloth over the table.

Nazi persecution began with the Jews, an already marginalized group; now, having asserted their power, they are targeting broad swaths of Dutch society. This development shows that intolerance isn't just a threat to fringe groups but erodes the safety and moral fabric of the entire society.

The soldiers storm into the house, looking around for young men and annoyed not to see any. The situation is especially tense because one of the Jews that Nollie is hiding is standing right there, dressed as a maid. The soldier asks Nollie's young daughter where her brother is, and Corrie holds her breath, knowing that the children have been taught not to lie and can't do so convincingly. The girl says simply that her brothers are under the table, and when the soldiers check and see no one there, she laughs and plays it off as a children's prank. Angry to see a young girl laughing at them, the soldiers leave.

While Corrie resigns herself to lying and stealing when she must, her niece embodies a somewhat different conviction—that one must find a way to protect those in need while also fulfilling religious teachings to the letter. While it has worked this time, it's clear that this strategy isn't tenable—there's so many ways it could go wrong in the future.

That evening, the family debates the issue of lying. Nollie says that her daughter did the right thing, but Peter and Corrie think they are being impractical and even illogical; after all, if one speaks the truth but practices a deception—like procuring fake ration cards—one is still committing a sin. Nollie quotes a psalm that seems to make a distinction between these two kinds of lying, but Corrie points out that she really did lie "with her lips" in order to keep the radio.

Corrie and Nollie are trying to find the answers to these questions through literal interpretations of Biblical scriptures. As the memoir progresses, Corrie will conclude that while one should always rely on the Bible for guidance, one must sometimes apply a more figurative meaning to its text.

At the end of the night, Corrie is still confused, wondering how even God could "show truth and love at the same time in a world like this." Suddenly, she thinks of the image of Christ stretched out on the cross.

Corrie realizes that Christ shows love for humans by sacrificing himself in a time of crisis. Implicitly, she recognizes that she must be willing to do so herself as well.

As time goes on, it becomes harder and harder to find safe houses in the country. Corrie knows she has to start hiding people in the city, even though it's not very safe there. Around this time, Harry and Cato come to her for help—their shop has just been confiscated, and they fear imminent deportation. Corrie is forced to send them to a safe house in the city where eighteen Jews are already living, mostly young people who are restless from confinement and make a lot of noise. Betsie, who visits often, is concerned that their carelessness endangers everyone.

While Corrie doesn't always explain the backgrounds of the fugitives she houses, she always gives many details about the dangers Harry and Cato face. Toggling between a broad depiction of her work and focus on individual cases, Corrie conveys both the scope of Nazi persecution and its startling and compelling human cost.

That winter is very difficult. There's little fuel, and people cut down trees along the canals to keep warm. Christoffels is found dead in his bed by his landlady, and the family gathers to bury him.

The death of Christoffels coincides and perhaps reflects the victory of his erstwhile Nazi tormentor, Otto—at least temporarily.

As spring slowly arrives, Cato arrives one night at the Beje. Tearfully, she tells Corrie that Harry has been arrested. The night before, a group of the young men "went crazy" and left the house. The Gestapo quickly caught them and raided the house. Cato hasn't been arrested because she's not Jewish, but she's desperately worried about her husband. Every day she goes to the police station, begging to see her husband, but always in vain.

Even though what the young men did seems foolish, it's easy to sympathize with their restlessness and despair. In its recklessness, their escape mirrors Peter's youthful gesture with the Wilhelmus—but because they are Jewish and Peter is not, the consequences for them are much more dire.

That Friday, Rolf van Vliet visits the shop again. Hurriedly, he tells Corrie that Harry will be taken to Amsterdam the next day, and Cato should come to the police station that afternoon to see him. When they arrive, Rolf brings Harry out to make hasty farewells. Harry and Cato embrace, and Harry tells Corrie that he will use whatever experience is coming next as "my witness stand for Jesus." Corrie feels that she will never see him again.

Even though Harry is being persecuted for his Judaism, he vows to use this tragedy in order to show his Christian values. His final gesture shows the essential and compelling linkages between these religions, and the utter folly of trying to separate them or discriminate on this basis.

That night the family debates taking Rolf into the operation. Corrie assigns one of the teenagers working for her as a messenger to figure out where Rolf lives. The next week, she visits him, asking if she can do anything in compensation for his kindness to Cato. Rolf says that a cleaning woman at the jail has asked for help hiding her son, in order to spare him from forced labor. Corrie tells Rolf to send her to the shop.

In this episode, it becomes evident that religious tolerance is beneficial to everyone in society. By bringing information to Corrie, Rolf provided help to Jews; in return, she is aiding a young man, a member of a different but also vulnerable demographic.

The next day the cleaning woman meets with Corrie at the shop, and that evening Corrie listens to her messengers' reports and decides on a suitable hiding place for the boy. She gives the cleaning woman a banknote as a fee for the "host" and instructs her on a secret spot near the canal where her son must meet the messenger who will transport him to his new home. Full of gratitude, the woman promises that someday she will repay them for this.

This complicated arrangement shows how adept and respected Corrie is becoming among the underground, even though she rarely dwells on these personal developments. Moreover, it shows her expanding the network of friends and contacts on whom she can rely for help.

In this fashion, Corrie continues her work, solving each problem as it comes up. Pickwick sends someone to install a clandestine telephone in the house, which is incredibly useful—by now the Beje is headquarters to an operation of eighty people, but they have to limit traffic in and out of the house. Corrie constantly worries whether her neighbors will grow suspicious of the frequent visitors or hear the telephone ring.

Paradoxically, the growth of Corrie's organization enables her to help more people but also makes her more susceptible to detection. Corrie is reliant on the brave moral choices of dozens of individuals, but she's also vulnerable to anyone who chooses a different moral path.

One June night, Corrie takes in a young Jewish woman and her newborn baby—an especially dangerous fugitive, as it's impossible to control the baby's crying. The next morning, a clergyman and friend of the family visits the shop by chance and Corrie thinks she's found her solution; she knows he lives in a secluded home outside the city. Quietly, she asks if he'd be willing to shelter a Jewish mother and baby. However, the clergyman becomes pale and fearful. He chides Corrie for endangering her father and sister by becoming involved with "this undercover business."

The memoir often dwells on people like Rolf who voluntarily do brave things even when they themselves won't benefit. Less frequently, it presents situations like this, where the clergyman falls short even when an opportunity for bravery is presented to him. Such moments are the flip side to the faith in people's moral capacities that generally sustains Corrie.

Hoping to change his mind, Corrie runs upstairs and fetches the tiny baby, returning him and placing him in the clergyman's arms. For a minute, the man stares down at the baby's tiny face, but he ultimately refuses, unwilling to risk his life.

This is similar to the moment when Corrie watched the Jewish doctor play with his children; however, while this inspired her to activism, it drives the clergyman towards the opposite choice.

Father quietly appears in the doorway and takes the baby in his own arms. He tells the clergyman that dying for this child would be "the greatest honor that could come to my family." The clergyman leaves quickly.

Father's declaration of his willingness to sacrifice himself is reminiscent of Corrie's earlier image of Jesus's sacrificial love for humanity.

Without the clergyman's help, Corrie has to accept a flawed solution, hiding the woman in a safe house that has already been raided by the Gestapo. A few weeks later, Corrie finds out that the farm has been raided again. In her anguish and hysteria, the mother began shrieking, and she and her baby were both taken.

Although the woman's arrest was a random tragedy not explicitly connected to the clergyman, Corrie seems to imply that while good moral choices have transformative possibilities, bad ones can lead to catastrophe.

In order to communicate by phone, Corrie and her workers develop a secret code, referring to fugitives as watches. For example, when she tells someone that "I have a watch here with a face that's causing difficulty," she means that she has a fugitive with stereotypically Semitic features, who needs to be placed in an especially secure hiding place.

Corrie's ability to speak in code like this shows her growing adeptness at leading an organization and coping with the many difficulties that arise.

One day, Corrie gets a call just like this, and tells the caller to "send the watch over." As she is setting out dinner an obviously Jewish man arrives, introduces himself courteously as Meyer Mossel, and asks permission to smoke his pipe. Corrie takes to him instantly.

Meyer's hallmark will be his ability to preserve the courtesies and gestures that, in this time of crisis, seem like outdated luxuries. He's a reminder that Jewish fugitives were not always desperate refugees but ordinary and idiosyncratic people, just like Corrie and her family.

Corrie brings Meyer upstairs, where he immediately bonds with Father, whom he jokingly calls "one of the Patriarchs" for his long white beard. Meyer and Father joke about the Psalms, which they both know thoroughly. After dinner, Father passes the **Bible** across the table to the new guest and asks if he will deliver the nightly reading. As it turns out, Meyer was once a cantor in an Amsterdam synagogue, and he has a beautiful and haunting voice.

Father's instant connection with Meyer recalls the visits he made to Jews in Amsterdam during Corrie's childhood. It's another reminder that his activism now springs from a lifetime of promoting tolerance. Moreover, the Bible again emerges as a symbol of tolerance, linking two religions together and engendering respect.

Corrie realizes that Meyer will probably have to stay at the Beje permanently, as they're unlikely to find someone else willing to hide him She decides to give him a Christian name, settling on Eusebius (Eusie for short), after the fourth-century church father, and Smit—a nod to the alias adopted by all members of the underground.

Meyer's new name is another homage to the links that bind Jews and Christians, and the respect with which they can approach each other's religions.

A more practical concern is Eusebius's devotion to kosher dietary rules, which prohibit him from eating pork. Meat is so rare by now that Betsie has to take what she can get for her ration coupons, and one day she firmly informs him that he must eat pork casserole to keep his strength up. Eusie concedes, saying that there must be an exception in the Talmud for these sorts of situations—and that he'll look for it after dinner.

Like Corrie, who must accustom herself to lying and stealing when it's necessary to save lives, Meyer must break the dietary rules he's honored his entire life in order to preserve his health. Both of these examples show that faith isn't about following arbitrary rules but adhering to a set of moral principles.

After Eusie's arrival, the family starts acquiring more permanent residents. The current apprentice, Jop, takes up residence as he risks being deported for forced labor every time he travels to and from work. Two young Jewish men—Henk, a lawyer, and Leendert, a schoolteacher—arrive as well.

The new arrivals to the Beje reverse the trend of departures that's been in effect since Corrie and her siblings reached adulthood. In this sense, the fugitives are not just guests but members of the family—inviting the reader to take a wider and more inclusive view of what constitutes a family.

Leendert makes an especially important contribution by building an electric warning system, which Pickwick has encouraged Corrie to acquire—something that will alert the whole household in the event of an unfriendly visitor and allow everyone to reach the secret room in time. Leendert installs a buzzer on the stairs and buttons to sound it at every window looking over the street, and in the workbenches in the shop.

Leendert's buzzer system will prove useful, but it will also fail Corrie. Corrie sees innovations like this as a tool to aid her mechanism, but she ultimately concludes that they can't stand in the way of God's inevitable will.

To be more prepared, Corrie starts running drills to prepare the household, to see how quickly everyone can get to the secret room without prior notice. The fugitives have to run quickly up to the secret room, while the ten Booms have to conceal any traces of their presence, from stray garments to warm mattresses. At lunch, they have a trial run. It's loud and chaotic, but the fugitives reach the secret room in four minutes while Betsie and Corrie rearrange the table to make it seem as though only three people are eating. Still, they leave tell-tale cigar ashes and other signs of additional occupants around the house.

After Corrie has spent so much time detailing the humanity, vivacity, and ingenuity of her fugitives, it's startling to view them as hunted beings whose very existence must be concealed. Practices like this are a reminder of the terrible dehumanization on which Nazi ideology and persecution ultimately rests.

By the fifth drill, they've reduced their time to two minutes. Meanwhile, Corrie, Toos, and Father develop stalling techniques they can use if the Gestapo come into the shop.

Toos's loyalty to the ten Booms is another quiet example of an ordinary person making exemplary moral choices in a time of need.

Three more fugitives arrive: Thea Dacosta, Mary Monsanto, and Mary Itallie. Mary, an elderly lady, poses an additional security problem. It's difficult for her to reach the secret room quickly and she wheezes loudly from her asthma. Corrie calls a meeting to address this issue. Eusie emphatically voices his support for Mary to stay, and Henk suggests a vote. People begin raising their hands in favor, but Mary insists on a secret ballot, so everyone can feel free to voice their true thoughts. When Corrie counts the nine ballots, everyone has voted for Mary to stay.

Even though Corrie tries to maximize the safety of her family and her fugitives, sometimes she concludes that adhering to principle is more important than avoiding risk. The solidarity that quickly forms around Mary is an example of the strength of character that arises in an inclusive and respectful environment, no matter how small or limited.


The nine people settle into their routine as a household—a fairly happy one, thanks to Betsie. She organizes activities to alleviate the tedium of confinement, and the group enjoys impromptu concerts, theater readings, Hebrew lessons from Meyer and Italian from Meta. Because electricity is so limited, in the evenings one person pedals on Corrie's bicycle to power up the headlight while another uses the light to read aloud history books, novels, and plays.

The group's devotion to culture and study contrasts with the political climate outside the house, which seems to defy any ideal of civilization or decency. This lesson in preserving humanity and morale during hard times will serve Corrie well during her later imprisonment.

STORM CLOUDS GATHER

While the evenings are enjoyable, the days grow more and more stressful. The operation centered around the Beje has grown very large, and dozens of workers, reports, and appeals pass through the house each day. There are so many ways to slip up or make a mistake.

While interconnectedness has always been the ten Boom family's greatest strength, now it poses a threat to their safety.

One day during lunch, Corrie thinks she sees a spy outside the window. Looking out, she realizes it's Katrien, one of the women hiding at Nollie's house. In tears, Katrien wails that the Gestapo came to the house, where Nollie and Annaliese, another fugitive, were in the living room. When the Gestapo asked Nollie if Annaliese was a Jew, she admitted that she was. Katrien says bitterly that Nollie has gone mad, and Corrie is upset that her sister's "rigid honesty" has gotten them all into trouble.

Nollie has done exactly the same thing as her daughter when the young girl had to answer questions about her brothers' whereabouts. However, this time the tactic has gotten her and Annaliese in trouble—it's clear that Corrie's tactic of fulfilling God's wishes, rather than conforming to rules, is probably more effective and appropriate.

Corrie jumps on her bike and pedals over to Nollie's house. Everything looks normal outside, but a moment later Nollie and Annaliese appear, dragged by two men into waiting cars. That night Corrie learns that Nollie has been taken to the nearby police station, but Annaliese has been sent to the prison in Amsterdam from which Jews are deported to death camps.

This is one of the terrible moments at which Corrie hints in the first chapter. While it forms a stark contrast with the happiness and calm of the hundredth birthday party, Corrie's earlier allusion to the things that "must" happen suggests that all these personal misfortunes are part of God's plan, and as such must be accepted.

The cleaning woman at the jail, whose son Corrie has previously helped, helps them keep in touch with Nollie. She smuggles food and the blue sweater Nollie has requested, and reports that she is very cheerful, singing hymns each day. Corrie is disturbed that Nollie can be singing "when she had betrayed another human being," but Nollie relays the message that God will not "let [Annaliese] suffer because I obeyed Him."

When the cleaning woman first promised to repay Corrie, she didn't believe that this would ever be necessary or possible; now she sees even the humblest person prove herself brave and able. Her frustration with Nollie—the strongest family strife Corrie ever describes—shows their thorny, mutual uncertainty about how best to serve God's will.

Six days later, Pickwick calls and summons Corrie to his house. He tells her that Annaliese is free, having been liberated with forty other Jews during a rescue at the Amsterdam prison. Corrie is astonished and grateful, wondering how Nollie had been so sure that this would happen.

Here, Nollie's outlook on morals seems validated—Corrie sees her sister's action as a kind of premonition, and the outcome as a divine reward for her faithfulness.

Nollie herself is transferred to another prison in Amsterdam, but Pickwick knows a sympathetic German doctor who sometimes can arrange a medical discharge for people. Corrie travels to see him, wondering how she can ingratiate herself with this man. When she reaches his house, she sees that he has three Doberman pinschers, and engages him in conversation about dogs for several minutes before revealing the real reason for her visit.

By surreptitiously cultivating the doctor's goodwill, Corrie sets herself apart from the straightforward and rigid honesty to which Nollie clings. However, even if Corrie herself believes that Nollie holds the moral high ground, it's she who has the capacity to get her sister out of prison.

Corrie tells the doctor that Nollie isn't physically strong, and emphasizes that she's the mother of six children who need her to provide for them (leaving out the fact that Nollie's youngest child is now sixteen). The doctor says he'll see what he can do, but weeks pass with no word. Corrie returns to Amsterdam, but this time the doctor dismisses her brusquely, telling her to be patient.

Corrie's telling a fib here, not with her actual words but with their implications. The doctor's rough dismissal of her worries is a reminder that Corrie is involved in a wide network of political calculations, in which she is far from the most powerful player.

During the weeks of waiting, Corrie is serving lunch to seventeen people at the Beje when one guest notices someone looking through the curtain. He's ostensibly washing the windows, although Betsie hasn't ordered this. In a moment of inspiration, Eusie starts singing "Happy Birthday," in order to make the lunch look like a celebration rather than an illicit gathering. Corrie goes outside and confronts the man, who claims that he's arrived at the wrong house by mistake. Trying to bluff, Corrie invites him inside, but he just walks away down the street.

The communal action of eating a meal together, an old tradition at the house, is warped by the tense circumstances and sense of vulnerability. Eusie's happy birthday song, a clever effort to evade detection, is a sad contrast to the hundredth birthday party at the beginning of the novel, which was characterized by a general sense of security and well-being.

The group starts running another kind of drill to test Corrie's ability to handle the Gestapo. Over and over, Henk, Leendert, Rolf, and her nephews wake her up in the middle of the night, shining lights in her face and demanding to know where she's hiding the Jews. Corrie finds it almost impossible to lie. When one of them asks "where your nine Jews are," she immediately responds that she only has six now; one night, when asked where she hides the ration cards, Corrie thinks of a "crafty" response and says that they're hidden inside a clock, instead of under the stairs. It's another moment before she realizes that she needs to pretend she doesn't have any ration cards hidden at all.

The difficulty with which Corrie learns to lie reflects her religious upbringing, in which she was taught to avoid falsehood at all costs. This moment is a turning point from earlier episodes in which the family discussed the finer moral issues of what kinds of lies are acceptable. Now, it's clear that the safety of many people depends on Corrie's ability to lie completely and believably. In this case, it's clear that even though she's teaching herself how to break God's rules, she's still fulfilling His will.

Willem frequently visits Haarlem. His own work is making him stressed and almost desperate. He's been able to hide most of the elderly Jews in his care, but some have been taken away despite their age. He knows he's being watched constantly by the Gestapo. He starts conducting weekly prayer services at the Beje, both to provide a reason for his regular visits and to give a legitimate reason for the large numbers of people coming and going from the house.

Although Willem and Corrie are each conducting different operations and limit their contact to avoid suspicion, it's clear that they aid and support each other along the way. Their relationship is a testament to the effectiveness in activism that's based in strong family networks.

One night everyone is sitting around after dinner when someone knocks on the door. Corrie hears German spoken outside. She opens the door to reveal Otto, their former apprentice—except now he pushes his way inside the house, demanding to be called Captain Altschuler. Clearly reveling in his new power, Otto asks after "the pious old **Bible** reader," meaning Father, and demands to be invited upstairs. Corrie surreptitiously presses the buzzer button and dawdles for as long as possible before bringing him upstairs.

While Betsie and Father always remind Corrie of the importance of forgiveness, Otto is reveling in the opportunity to take revenge on his erstwhile employer. This moment contrasts with later episodes in which Corrie has the opportunity to avenge herself against her foes but turns it down.

When Otto bursts into the dining room, only Father and Betsie are sitting at the table. Corrie herself can barely believe that twelve people were gathered here only minutes before. Otto sits down at the table and taunts the family for fifteen minutes; then, with no one rising to the bait, he leaves. Corrie waits another half hour before giving the all-clear signal.

Otto clearly wanted to gain some psychological boost by showing off his new power, but instead he leaves frustrated, having accomplished nothing. Vengeful actions are not only hurtful to others, they are destructive to the person who performs them.

In October, Nollie suddenly calls home. She's been released and is waiting at the Amsterdam train station with no money. Corrie gathers Flip and the children, and they hurry onto the next train to Amsterdam; at the station they see her immediately, wearing her blue sweater. She's puzzled at the reason for her release—a doctor has announced that her six young children might become a burden to society without her care.

Nollie's sudden release from prison and abandonment at the train station foreshadows similar events in Corrie's future, and helps create the sense that the family's lives follow a pattern—however, she will be released under tragic circumstances and in terrible physical shape.

It's almost Christmas, 1943. The holiday isn't very cheerful, as everyone seems to have family members hiding or deported. The ten Booms are not only celebrating the Christian holiday but Hanukkah as well. Every night they light one more candle as Eusie reads the ancient story aloud and sings the haunting traditional songs. On the fifth night, a kindly neighbor knocks on the door and asks Corrie if "your Jews could sing a little more softly." The family is touched to know that the neighbors know what's going on and haven't reported them, but worried that it's growing harder and harder to avoid notice.

By according Hanukkah the same importance as Christmas, the ten Booms are demonstrating their respect for Judaism; valuing each other's holidays allows the group to grow closer together and improves morale. The revelation that Corrie's neighbor knows what she's doing and hasn't told anyone is another instance of an ordinary person who makes an explicit choice, no matter how small, to participate in her lifesaving work.

One morning Toos brings a letter to Corrie from the chief of police, ordering her to report to his office that afternoon. She has no idea what's going to happen, but she packs a bag of supplies in case she gets arrested. All day workers prepare the house for a search, removing all incriminating evidence.

The matter-of-factness with which Corrie confronts the possibility of her own imprisonment is a reminder of her stoicism about personal misfortune, springing from her belief that everything happening to her is part of God's plan.

However, when Corrie arrives, the chief of police says that he knows about her work and sympathizes with her; in fact, he himself is part of an underground organization within the police. However, another policeman is leaking information to the Gestapo, putting dozens of people in danger. The chief has called Corrie to see if she knows anyone in her operation who can kill this man.

That so many people have found out about Corrie's work without her knowledge is disturbing, even if the chief is sympathetic. Here, Corrie is being asked to participate in resistance work that entails moral dilemmas much more serious than her worries about petty deception.

Carefully, Corrie says that her role is "to save life, not destroy it." She can't help him, but she offers to pray with him. Together they bow their heads and pray that this errant Dutchman will change his ways. Corrie returns home and tells everyone that they are safe, but she doesn't say that they've been asked to aid in a murder, fearing that Father and Betsie will be upset.

Even though Corrie is willing to break earthly laws and some divine rules in order to work in the underground, she clearly knows when she must stop. Her rebuff of this request shows that she can be flexible in her interpretation of religious teachings while still adhering to fundamental principles.

Now it's clear that their work is becoming less and less secret. Corrie knows she should curtail her operation, but to do so would jeopardize hundreds of people. Instead, she continues as always and waits for disaster.

Corrie's passivity here contrasts with her normally proactive approach to maximizing the safety of her work—possibly because she believes that she has more to lose and is willing to sacrifice herself.

The first strike comes to Jop, the apprentice. One afternoon Rolf arrives with information that an underground house will be searched that night. Jop volunteers to bring the message, even though he's not very experienced. However, he never comes back. The next day Rolf arrives with the news that Jop himself has been caught up in the raid and brought to Amsterdam, where the interrogators will probably get information out of him.

It's saddening that this catastrophe falls on Jop, one of the youngest members of the underground. Even though Corrie is willing to sacrifice herself for her work, she can do this without implicating many other people who are comparatively uninvolved, like Jop.

Corrie, Father, and Betsie stay up praying long after everyone has gone to sleep. In spite of increasing danger, they see no choice except to keep moving forward. Corrie thinks that perhaps when "human effort" is completely exhausted, "God's power" will be revealed.

Corrie's work demonstrates her belief that humans must make every possible effort to fulfill God's will, but she also ultimately believes that all such efforts are inadequate. One of the conclusions she draws from her faith is the importance of hard work, even when such work is doomed to fail.

THE RAID

Corrie comes down with the flu. She feels terrible and disoriented, and everything is aggravated by the noise of the household, especially the fugitives coming and going from the secret room just next to her bed. In the morning, Betsie wakes her up saying that there's a man at the door waiting to speak to her.

This moment of personal annoyance, one of the few Corrie expresses in the entire novel, is a reminder of her usual selflessness.

Unsteadily, Corrie gets dressed and goes downstairs. In the front rooms people are gathering for Willem's service. Nollie is passing around makeshift coffee and Peter is playing the piano. At the door, the strange man tells Corrie that his wife has been arrested for hiding Jews. He needs money for a bribe to get her out of jail and prevent her from being interrogated.

It's cheering to Corrie that her family still gathers regularly, preserving its habits from before the war. However, their continued close association puts everyone at risk if one branch is discovered.

Something about the man's urgent demeanor gives Corrie a bad feeling, but she knows she has to help him in his hour of need. Corrie tells him to come back in an hour and sends Toos to the bank for the money. Then she stumbles upstairs to bed, shaking with cold.

The fact that Corrie has dealt with this entire scenario alone, despite her sickness, reflects her undisputed position as leader of the organization.

Corrie wakes up at night to the sound of the buzzer. At first she thinks it's a drill, but then she realizes the long-awaited emergency has finally arrived. Corrie stuffs her briefcase, full of ration cards and addresses of houses, into the room. She's just gotten back in bed and is praying for God to heal Mary's wheezing when the Gestapo officers burst inside.

It's interesting that Corrie is eager to view any small misfortune, like Mary's silence, as God's benevolence, but she doesn't see disasters like the arrival of the Gestapo as an act of God.

The officer asks Corrie where she's hiding the Jews, but she pretends to be sleepy and confused as to what he's talking about. She puts on her clothes, trying to make noise to cover up any of Mary's asthma. She wants to grab the prison bag that she's kept prepared for such a situation, but it's sitting right in front of the panel that leads to the secret room. Reluctantly, she leaves it behind and goes downstairs.

The prison bag is a kind of talisman for Corrie, allowing her to feel a measure of control even though she could be imprisoned at any moment. By leaving it behind, she's trusting herself completely to God's mercy, without any worldly defense against what's coming to her.

Downstairs Father, Betsie, and Toos are sitting against the wall, along with three underground workers who had been in the house. A small wooden sign advertising Alpina watches, which Corrie usually keeps in the window as a signal that it's safe to enter, has been knocked to the ground—she's relieved that someone moved it out of the way in all the chaos. Gestapo officers are pawing through the cache of valuables and money, which they've already discovered.

The officers' greedy interest in the money contrasts with the ten Booms' disinterest in such things and their steadfast storage of their friends' valuables. This suggests that religious intolerance is not an isolated fault but something that coincides with and depends on other vices like greed. For example, the officers may be more eager to persecute Jews since they know they'll be able to confiscate their valuables.

According to the officer's information, Corrie is "the leader of the whole outfit." He pushes her into the shop and asks her where she hides her Jews and ration cards, slapping her between each question. Corrie calls on Jesus to protect her, and the officer warns, "if you say that name again I'll kill you." When she still won't answer his questions, he returns her upstairs and takes Betsie away.

The officer's violent reaction when Corrie invokes Jesus evinces a sense of fear. It seems he believes religion to be as much of an enemy as the ten Booms themselves, possibly because it encourages people to stand up against the Nazi state.

Corrie sees that the other officer has placed the Alpina sign back in the window. He's figured out that it was some sort of signal. Just then, an underground member arrives at the door to announce that Pickwick has been arrested. The Gestapo officer gets as much information out of her as he can, then arrests her. Corrie realizes that the Beje has been turned into a trap. There's no way for anyone to know it's not safe until they're already inside.

Corrie's wide network of friends and family, and people's ease in coming and going from the Beje, has always proved a boon. Now, however, it exacerbates the catastrophe, allowing the Gestapo to arrest more operatives and extract more information.

Betsie reappears with a huge bruise in her cheek. As Corrie cries over her injuries, she says that she feels sorry for the officer. Hearing this, the man turns around and shouts at her to remain silent.

Betsie's forgiveness is not just a personal virtue but a kind of weapon—her ability to forgive intimidates the officers and reminds them of their mutual humanity.

The officer jerks the **Bible** off its shelf and shouts at Father that the holy book prescribes obedience to the government. Mildly, Father quotes the psalm to which he's referring, which says to "Fear God and honor the king." The officer shouts that "we're the legal government now, and you're all lawbreakers!"

Here, it's clear that the officer's literal interpretation of the Bible is self-serving and wrong. In this scenario, the best way to "fear" God isn't by obeying the Nazi state but by standing up to it.

Meanwhile, other soldiers have been searching for a secret room without success. The officer shrugs and says that this doesn't matter—they'll just post a guard around the house, and the people inside the room will starve to death or come outside. He orders everyone to get their coats. Corrie is saddened to see Willem, Nollie, and Peter emerge from another room, caught up in the raid as well. Father insists on winding the clock before he leaves.

It's upsetting to Corrie that her family is being arrested, but even worse that her fugitives may be trapped inside the house, as they would probably face fates worse than imprisonment upon discovery.

The family is marched to the nearby police station, through the doors where Corrie last saw Harry de Vries into a large gymnasium. For hours they sit on the floor, dazed, while officers take down names and addresses. Corrie counts thirty-six people arrested in the raid on the Beje, but she doesn't see Pickwick.

The association between this room and Harry makes the situation even more ominous, as Corrie has heard nothing of her friend since his deportation and believes him to be dead.

When the officer goes out of earshot, Corrie hisses that they must all settle on a cohesive story, but Peter silences her with a frown, whispering that the watchmaker currently talking with Father is a Gestapo informer. Corrie realizes that her faculties have been impaired by the flu, and lies back down. She's too sick even to eat the rolls given to them at dinnertime.

Corrie has always been a sharp and adept leader, but because of her illness she's liable to make mistakes. By emphasizing her human fallibility, she reminds the reader that anyone could be thrust into her position or have to take on a role like hers.

Everyone gathers around Father for evening prayers—just like they did at home. Although the **Bible** has been left behind, Father carries its teachings in his heart and is able to recite perfectly. He quotes the same psalm about the "hiding place" that Corrie remembers from her childhood.

Here, the same psalm Father read during Corrie's childhood reminiscence resurfaces. This stylistic technique conveys a sense that Corrie's life follows a divine plan, and that her whole childhood was preparation for this situation.

No one sleeps well, and in the morning the offers reenter with their papers. At noon, they're again led out of the building and into a large bus. Many people are gathered along the police barricades. Recognizing Father, they cry out in horror at the idea of him going to prison. Corrie sees officers hauling Pickwick, who is covered in bruises and dried blood, onto the bus. As the bus starts up and crosses the market square, Corrie remembers her vision from years ago. The image she had seen is finally coming to pass.

Corrie views her long-ago vision as a sign from God, which is now being fulfilled. Even though what God predicted is essentially a catastrophe, she doesn't blame him or interpret this as evidence of ill will. Rather, she sees it as attempt to strengthen her against what is a tragic but necessary event in her life.

SCHEVENINGEN

In two hours, the bus reaches The Hague, and the prisoners are marched into the national Gestapo headquarters for another round of officers recording names and addresses. When the chief interrogator sees Father, he's distressed that such an old man has been arrested and offers to send him home if he promises not to cause more trouble. However, Father says that if he goes home today, "tomorrow I will open my door again to any man in need." He's ordered back into line.

Here, the German officer has a moment of moral clarity when he sees how inhumane it is to subject the elderly to these kinds of conditions. However, his commitment to Nazi ideology trumps this firm impulse, especially when Father demonstrates his own moral clarity.

Everyone stands in line for hours, waiting to be questioned. Corrie sees the police beating a Jewish man who is clinging to the bag he's brought with him, until he's kicked to the ground. Sick and exhausted, Corrie feels furious at the amount of noise this fight is generating; she feels a sense of hatred towards the man "for being so helpless and hurt."

Throughout her time in prison, Corrie will have to fight against the tendency of harsh circumstances to erode empathy and moral clarity. This is the first such test of her principles.


At night, they are again loaded onto buses and taken outside the city to a federal prison in Scheveningen. Soldiers prod them inside and line them up against the wall, and then the women prisoners are led away. Looking back towards her male relatives, Corrie cries out to Father, "God be with you!" He echoes her farewell calmly.

Even though this isn't an explicitly political cry, given the explicit hostility of German officers to religious rhetoric, by bidding farewell to Father this way Corrie is reaffirming their mutual resistance to the Nazi state.

The women are processed again by female guards and forced to give up all their valuables, then placed in different shared cells. Corrie is separated from Betsie and Nollie and put in a room with strangers. Because she is sick, they women give her the cot, but they also protest to the guard about the possibility of contagion.

The women in prison are also torn between kindness and the impulse to put themselves first—the kind of thinking that prison conditions encourage.


Corrie doesn't believe she can sleep, but the next thing she knows, it's morning and guards are shoving gruel through the door. Corrie can't stomach hers. All day the women are confined in the cramped cell, and Corrie has her first experience of "prison boredom." She wonders what will happen to her cat, left behind at the Beje, but she tries not to think too hard about the people in the secret room, trusting them to God's care.

It's hard to have faith that God will save the fugitives when he's allowed Corrie's whole family to be imprisoned. Events like this force Corrie to admit that there's some things she can't explain through religion—but she's able to experience this realization without wavering in her faith.

Their only information about the outside world comes from one cellmate who has been here for three years, and is adept at interpreting the different footsteps of people passing through the corridor. It seems that she and the other prisoners avoid talking or even thinking about life outside prison, in order to keep themselves from going crazy. But Corrie can't stop herself from worrying about her family and friends.

Prison causes the women to abandon their previous principles and interests—the very things that make them humans and individuals. This phenomenon mirrors the way that Nazi occupation encourages people stop thinking of themselves as individuals but rather as members of religious or ethnic groups.

For days Corrie tosses with fever and coughs up blood. Two weeks after her arrival, the warden summons her outside, where she gets her first glimpse of the sky, and puts her in a car headed for the hospital. After hours in the waiting room, a crisp nurse escorts Corrie to the lavatory, where she kindly and surreptitiously asks if there's anything she can get for her. Corrie asks for a **Bible**, needle and thread, and a toothbrush. She's cheered up for the rest of the day.

It's important that Corrie asks for a Bible alongside basic hygienic supplies. For her, the Bible is as important as her physical health—indeed, having access to it helps restore her health and gives her strength to confront the challenges that await.

When Corrie finally sees the doctor, he diagnoses her with pre-tubercular pleurisy, saying that he hopes he's doing her a favor. On her way out, the kind nurse presses a small package in her hand. When she gets back to her cell, she unwraps it to find two bars of soap and the Gospels in booklet form. She offers to share everything, but while her cellmates eagerly accept the soap, they won't touch the **Bible**—being caught with this contraband leads to a double sentence.

Corrie's reaction to the Bible is exactly opposite that of her roommates. She's much more concerned with her spiritual comfort than her physical well-being, while they don't want to risk the physical consequences of being caught with this contraband. While their position is understandable, as a prisoner Corrie will work to keep spirituality at the forefront of people's minds, regardless of their physical circumstances.

Two days later, a guard appears suddenly and snaps at Corrie to collect her things, warning her not to talk or ask questions. She thinks she's being released, but she's actually placed in a solitary cell. Contemplating the idea of imprisonment in this dark cell by herself, Corrie feels panicky and retches in the bucket. For several days Corrie's illness becomes worse—she's hardly able to walk or get out of her cot, much less eat food. Every morning a prisoner or guard delivers gruel, but each one refuses to speak to her. If she tries to ask questions, a guard shouts from outside that solitary prisoners aren't allowed to talk.

Now it becomes clear that by "doing her a favor," the doctor was trying to get her assigned to a cell of her own. Although this change provides greater physical comfort, it's an emotionally alien situation for Corrie, who's accustomed to being surrounded by other people. Used to thinking of herself as a member of a family, however large or unconventional, she doesn't know how to function here.

This same guard often taunts Corrie from outside the cell, criticizing her for lying in bed all day and mockingly calling her a "great lady." Corrie finds this puzzling, as she couldn't accomplish anything by getting out of bed even if she wanted to.

The guard's lack of empathy is extraordinary here—she's not just doing her job but exulting in it and the cruelty she's permitted.

As Corrie's health returns, she becomes a little calmer and less despairing. She spends hours looking out of the tiny window in her cell and reads her **Gospels** again and again. She wonders if the entire war, with all its needless suffering, was in fact "part of the pattern first revealed in the Gospels." After all, even Jesus had "been defeated as utterly and unarguably as our little group and our small plans had been." To avoid losing track of time, she records the days with a sharpened corset stay. One day she realizes it's her birthday and tries to sing a song, but the guard yells at her to be quiet.

Corrie has been accustomed to reading the Bible for abstract spiritual advice, not in order to understand the exact events around her. Paradoxically, as her circumstances worsen they become more and more reminiscent of the ancient catastrophes described in the Bible, especially the Roman persecution leading to Christ's crucifixion. Even though she's approaching the worst time in her life, this comparison allows her to feel close to God.

Two days later, Corrie gets her first shower. Even though the women are still prohibited from talking, it's incredible just to see other people again. She resolves to take her **Gospels** with her the next time and distribute them among the women; she's learned from solitary confinement that "it was not possible to be rich alone." Back in her cell, she notices ants coming in and out and starts sharing crumbs with them, to entice them to visit more often and entertain her.

Corrie's conception of herself as "rich," is remarkable, considering the dire state of affairs right now. In describing herself thus she's emphasizing the ability of the Bible to provide spiritual tranquility, a kind of wealth in and of itself, regardless of one's earthly situation. It's also important that Corrie has the immediate impulse to share with others—her principles of tolerance and inclusion have not been eroded by solitary confinement.

One afternoon, Corrie suddenly hears all the prisoners shouting to each other through the walls. She wonders how this is happening, as the guards normally punish talking. As it turns out, they are all away at a party for Hitler's birthday. Corrie shouts out her name to be relayed down the hall and hopes for news to return to her. Eventually, she finds that while Betsie is still in prison, Nollie, Toos, Peter, Pickwick, Willem, and everyone else from the raid has been released. Only about Father is there no information.

The efficient exchange of information while the guards are away is a remarkable display of cohesion, despite the efforts of prison rules to discourage such communal feelings among the women. This reflects Corrie's feeling that solidarity is natural and inspired by God, whereas intolerance is an aberrance contrary to His will.

A week later Nollie manages to get a package to Corrie. Inside is her blue sweater, cookies, vitamins, a needle, and a red towel. She immediately sets up these items around her cell, making it more cheerful. Remembering that messages sometimes came to the Beje under a stamp, she works off the stamp on Nollie's package and finds a tiny note saying, "all the watches in your closet are safe." This means that all the people in the secret room have escaped. Corrie bursts out sobbing.

Nollie sends Corrie the same sweater that she wore during her own imprisonment, creating a link between their two experiences even though they are now physically severed. For Corrie, the revelation that all the Jews are safe means that she has been right in her stoicism and decision to "trust them" to God—God has finally rewarded her faith.

Now that she has the needle, Corrie has been entertaining herself by pulling threads from the red towel and embroidering on her pajamas. Suddenly, a letter is thrust under the door. It's from Nollie and it delivers the news that Father is dead, having survived his arrest only ten days. The family still doesn't know how it happened or where he was buried.

Father has always been at the epicenter of the family. The fact that he has died separated from his children and without their knowledge represents the possibility of the war to dissolve family bonds, one of it's worst threats.

Corrie starts sobbing and begs for a passing guard to talk to her. The guard, barely more than a girl, gives her a sedative when Corrie explains that she's just heard terrible news about her father. Still, she admonishes Corrie that whatever happens to her, "you brought it on yourself by breaking the laws."

Like the guard who shouts at Corrie, this young girl is striking in her inability to empathize. Whereas Corrie searches for the humanity even in people she doesn't like, these people distance themselves from their prisoners by denying the validity of their emotions, even of serious grief.

Corrie takes comfort from her faith that Father is now with Jesus. She scratches down the date of his "release" in her improvised calendar on the wall.

Reinterpreting the tragedy of Father's death this way, Corrie uses faith to soothe her grief and preserve her emotional strength.

THE LIEUTENANT

One day, Corrie is taken to a "hearing"—she's led outside of the prison to a cheerful cottage with a warm fire, where a German officer introduces himself courteously as Lieutenant Rahms and settles her by the fire. He tells her that he can help her, but only if she tells him everything. Corrie knows she has to be on guard against this calculated friendliness, and for an hour she evades his questions about fake ration cards. Luckily, she doesn't actually know that much about the operation with which she's been involved, due to the secrecy its members imposed on each other.

The contrast between the awful prison and the cheerful officers' quarters is stark—physical differences like this are part of the Nazis' campaign to deny the humanity of Jews and other prisoners, while affirming it in Germans. Corrie's triumph is that she's able to recognize the essential humanity in everyone, whether it's a dirty and exhausted prisoner or a loathed German officer.

When the Lieutenant asks about Corrie's "other activities," meaning hiding Jews, she feigns ignorance and embarks on a long explanation of her years of religious instruction of mentally disabled children. The lieutenant is genuinely perplexed, telling her that such things are a "waste of time and energy" and that "surely one normal person is worth all the half-wits in the world." Corrie sees that this man has been completely brainwashed by Nazi philosophy.

The Lieutenant's seemingly unfeigned courtesy to Corrie contrasts with the horrifying prejudice he casually demonstrates. Here, Nazi intolerance again emerges as a threat not just to the group they specifically target—Jews—but to every conceivable marginalized group in society.

Carefully, Corrie explains to Lieutenant Rahms that God cares about people "simply because he has made us," not because of any artificial value the world imposes on them. Lieutenant Rahms abruptly ends the interrogation.

Even though Corrie has spoken gently, her words have struck an uncomfortable chord with the Lieutenant. Even though religious rhetoric can seem abstract or even cliché, it allows ordinary people to speak truth to power.

However, in the morning Lieutenant Rahms himself comes to Corrie's cell and brings her to his office. He asks her to tell him about the **Bible**, and Corrie says that it says that with God's help, "we need no longer walk in the dark." She asks Lieutenant Rahms about the darkness in his own life, and he confesses that he can't stand the work he does and is constantly worried about his wife and children suffering bombings in Germany.

Previously, people from different religions have united around their mutual respect for holy texts. Now, the Bible helps two enemies have a meaningful and respectful discussion, regardless of their divergent views. Not only does the Bible provide a connection to the divine, it facilitates such connections with other human beings.

For two more days Corrie meets with the Lieutenant, who mostly wants to hear about her childhood and religious faith. Corrie asks him to have her transferred back into a cell with other people or even Betsie, but Lieutenant Rahms refuses, telling her that he has no authority and is "in prison" himself.

Even though the Lieutenant is critical and doubtful of his own work, he's not truly motivated to take any action. The difference between him and someone like Rolf emerges through explicit moments like these, where they choose to fight or support injustice.

At their last meeting, the Lieutenant asks Corrie to explain the divine meaning of suffering. He asks her what kind of God would let her father die in prison. However, before she can try to answer a guard comes to take her back. The lieutenant tells her softly to walk slowly in Corridor F.

Here, the Lieutenant touches on the very things that Corrie can't explain. The fact that she's physically prevented from answering this question reflects her belief that one doesn't have to know the answer to every question to have strong religious faith.

Following his instructions, Corrie sees Betsie's cell, which is much neater and more cheerful than the others, with food packages neatly arranged. She knows that this atmosphere is the result of Betsie's influence. She even sees her sister's back and her neat bun.

Betsie's work in arranging her cell may seem superficial, but it's an extension of the housekeeping work she's always done, which fosters a spirit of empathy and inclusion for everyone in the Beje. Betsie's triumph is that she can cling to her best attributes even among the stresses of prison.

Weeks later, Lieutenant Rahms organizes a brief family reunion at the prison—the pretext is the official reading of Father's will, for which all family members must be present. Stunned, Corrie walks into his office to be embraced by Willem, Nollie, and Betsie for the first time in months. Willem says that Kik has been arrested and deported while helping a downed American parachutist; Father, meanwhile, died in a municipal hospital after becoming ill in his cell. While the lieutenant has his back turned, Nollie presses a tiny **Bible** into Corrie's hands. Corrie is especially thankful because she has just given away her last Gospel in the shower.

Here Lieutenant Rahms actually does take a stand, however small, on behalf of Corrie and Betsie. The family's gathering now is a positive contrast to Father's lonely death. It's also notable that Corrie is presented with a new Bible just as she's given away all her Gospels—it suggests that people are rewarded when they are generous with their belongings, rather than hoarding them.

Willem quietly relays the information that Rolf and another underground police officer helped the Jews escape from the Beje while they were assigned by the Gestapo to "guard" it. All of the fugitives are safe now except for Mary Itallie, who inexplicably went walking during the day and got arrested.

The fact that Rolf, a member of the Dutch police, was put on duty instead of Gestapo officers seems like a random piece of fortune—but for Corrie, it's evidence of God's personal intervention in favor of her work.

After some minutes, the Lieutenant curtails the reunion. Before leaving, Willem leads the group in prayer, thanking God for bringing them together and for the influence of the Lieutenant, who can gain nothing from helping them.

Willem is quick to attribute their fortune in being able to reunite to God's will. This is part of the family's wholesale acceptance of every aspect of their lives as part of God's plan.

VUGHT

One morning, the order comes to gather all possessions and get ready to evacuate. Corrie knows that the Allies must be getting closer to Holland and feels cheered up. She gathers her toothbrush and hides her **Bible** inside her clothes. However, she has to wait several more hours before she's finally allowed out of the cell. All the women are sure that the invasion is imminent.

Throughout the chapters that follow, Corrie will be completely unaware of what's going on in the outside world or even what will happen to her over the course of a day. Although this is obviously a function of imprisonment, it also reflects the general ignorance in which humans live, and the extent to which they must trust their fates to God.

As they march out of the prison, Corrie looks everywhere for Betsie, but doesn't see her. She's loaded onto a bus that stops at a freight yard outside the city. Eventually, she spots Betsie in another group of prisoners; by the time they get the order to board a train, it's already pitch dark and Corrie is able to fight her way into Betsie's group and grab her hand. Finding seats on the train, they weep in gratitude to be reunited. The months in Scheveningen have been their first separation in their entire lives.

Corrie sees her reunion with Betsie as the best possible compensation for her imprisonment. This emphasizes how important it is for her to be in a family environment, and how much more important proximity to her family is than almost any other consideration.

At some point, the train starts moving; Corrie sees by the signs that they are moving towards southern Holland, rather than Germany, and is relieved. When they finally stop, the train seems to be in the middle of the woods. The women are forced off the train into soggy, muddy forest through which they march for a mile, eventually reaching a row of barracks. Betsie and Corrie fall onto a hard bench and fall asleep together.

The bewildering hardships to which the women are exposed, like this march through the forest, emphasize the fundamental inexplicability of Nazi persecution. While Corrie knows she can't rationalize this with religious arguments, it doesn't weaken her faith.

When they wake up, they and the other prisoners are hungry and thirsty, but no guards arrive with food or news until the evening. Eventually, they learn that they are in a German-constructed camp called Vught. These barracks are part of the quarantine compound outside the camp proper. The women must wait to be processed in idleness and discomfort. The guards, anxious at the large number of women and lack of strong cells, constantly shout obscenities and threaten extra punishments.

Even though they are still within Holland's borders, the women have been moved from prewar Dutch prisons to an entirely German camp. This isn't just a physical transition, but also means that none of the normal procedures and rules for treatment of civilian prisoners will apply here.

After two weeks Betsie, Corrie, and some other women are separated from the group during morning roll call. They are given pink forms and a worker from the food crew tells them that these forms indicate release. Thinking that they'll be going soon, Betsie and Corrie distribute their few possessions among the women left behind.

Remarkably, even when they are looking forward to going home, the sisters' first impulse is to care for others less fortunate than they are.


All day, Betsie and Corrie wait in various lines in the administrative buildings, anticipating imminent freedom. Corrie's watch and ring, which she surrendered at Scheveningen, are returned to her. However, at the end of the day her goods are confiscated again, and the women are marched through the gates of the camp proper. Apparently, they're not getting released at all.

The constant waiting in pointless lines—a process that's repeated every time Corrie is transferred from one prison to another—emphasizes the fundamental absurdity of the Nazi bureaucracy, and the regime it represents.

On their way in, the guard stops and shows them the punishment cells, where prisoners who misbehave are trapped in rooms the size of gym lockers. One prisoner is removed as they watch, alive but unconscious and unable to move. Corrie feels that this cruelty is impossible to understand, and she prays that God will "carry it for me."

Even when Corrie feels she can't explain the cruelty around her through religion, she's not disillusioned with her faith but reminded of the disparity between her understanding and God's.

Inside Vught, they again have to wait in long lines to be processed again. Corrie wails impatiently to Betsie, but her sister placidly replies that this is the best possible way to spend their lives. She says that if the cruel guards, most of them young women, "can be taught to hate, they can be taught to love" as well. It's their responsibility to figure out how to do this. Corrie is astounded that while she sees the guards as a threat, Betsie sees them as "wounded" humans.

Throughout their time in concentration camps, Betsie displays worry over the spiritual state of even the most abusive guards. Just as Corrie shows that people prove themselves good or bad through the choices they make, she emphasizes that hatred and cruelty aren't inherent vices but products of one's education and environment.

The next day, Betsie is assigned to sew prison uniforms with the other elderly and sick women. Looking stronger, Corrie is assigned to the factory outside the camp grounds, which manufactures radios. Corrie sits obediently among hundreds of other prisoners, settling into her monotonous task while German officers stroll the aisles.

Although they are almost the same age, Corrie is much more physically able than Betsie. This gives her a feeling of responsibility for her sister and a sense of purpose that sustains her through difficult times.

One of the officers tells the prisoner-foreman that "quality control" must improve, and the foreman says that the people can't work well without adequate rations. The officer responds angrily, saying that "if the soldiers on the front can fight on half-rations," than the prisoners can work on them too. A female officer gives him a warning look, and the officer amends his statement, saying he's only giving a hypothetical example. Of course, he clarifies, there are plenty of rations for soldiers on the front.

The officer's slip-up reveals that things aren't going well for the German army. However, it also reveals how dependent Corrie is on untrustworthy sources for crucial information. This recalls earlier moments when the ten Booms realized that news sources on which they once depended like newspapers, were mechanisms of propaganda rather than truth.

As soon as the officers leave the building, everyone stops working and pulls out knitting, books, paper, and biscuits. People visit their friends across the room and others pump Corrie for information about the world outside Vught. Eventually the foreman ushers them back to their benches to finish the daily quota.

Despite the harsh conditions of the concentration camp, the factory workers have formed a small and vibrant community. For Corrie, this represents the essential human need for companionship and connection to others.

Corrie is very interested in the mechanics of radio construction; finding out that she's a trained watchmaker, the foreman gives her a more exciting task—assembling the relay switches on the radios. The foreman is kind towards all the workers, finding simple jobs for people who are tired and harder ones for those who need more stimulation. Only later does Corrie find out that he's still grieving for his son, who was shot in Vught before she arrived.

Corrie admires the man for his strength of character, but he's actually a lot like her. Both are unsparing in their empathy and efforts on behalf of others, while remaining stoic and accepting of their own personal misfortunes.

When Corrie works too diligently on her task, the foreman tells her to slow down, lest their quota be increased. Reminding her that the radios are being used for German fighter planes, he always tweaks the wiring so that the radios are imperceptibly flawed.

Sabotaging the radios is much like the lying to which Corrie resigned herself—technically, it's an act of deception that goes against religious laws, but really it fulfills God's will by hindering the Nazi state.

After lunch, the workers are allowed to walk outside the factory for half an hour. Corrie usually sleeps on the warm ground, dreaming of happier summers at home. At the end of the work day, she stands through another roll call inside the camp and then returns to her barracks, where Betsie is always waiting at the doorway.

The fact that Corrie is reduced to napping on the ground—and relates this circumstance so casually—quietly demonstrates how dire her circumstances actually are. However, this picture is somewhat lightened by Betsie's faithfulness and her ability to recreate family rituals even within the camp.

One day, Betsie meets a woman from Ermelo, another Dutch city, who helps explain the circumstances of their arrest. Apparently, the man who asked Corrie for the bribe to free his wife is a Gestapo spy, Jan Vogel. Originally working in Ermelo, he became too well-known there and eventually moved to Haarlem.

Before this, Corrie had not thought much about her family's betrayal. Now, seeing it as the result of a specific and malicious moral choice, it's a lot more troubling to her.

Knowing the identity of their betrayer makes Corrie furious. She imagines Father spending his last hours alone, and the life-saving work that has now ground to a halt. She feels that if Jan Vogel were to appear before her, she could kill him. That night she feels unable to lead the clandestine prayer meetings which she's organized and hands the **Bible** to Betsie.

Corrie's feelings are understandable and justified—yet, they also impede her ability to connect with God by praying. This shows that even though vengeful feelings are natural, one must overcome them for one's own spiritual health.

All week Corrie feels sick over Jan Vogel's betrayal. However, when she discusses this with Betsie, she's astonished to see that her sister has no feelings of rage at all. Rather, she prays for Jan Vogel every night, feeling that he must be suffering internally for his crimes.

Betsie's impulse to forgive even the most egregious offenses is extremely remarkable. While Corrie often feels she can't attain her sister's mindset, trying to emulate her helps her spiritually improve herself.

Corrie lies awake in her bunk, feeling admiration for Betsie's extraordinary compassion. Eventually, she realizes that she, like Jan Vogel, is guilty before God, having "murdered him with my heart and with my tongue." She prays to be able to forgive Jane Vogel, and for the safety of his family.

This comparison is somewhat troubling—after all, it's hard to believe that Corrie's feelings of anger are equal to Vogel's betrayal of dozens of people. Perhaps Corrie's thoughts can be interpreted as the impulse to seek connections with people rather than emphasizing differences.

Each day at Vught brings both good and bad things. For example, morning roll call is "cruelly long" and gets pushed earlier for each minor infraction. However, while standing outside with aching legs, Corrie sees the beautiful dawn break over the wide sky, holding Betsie's hand in "awe."

Appreciating the sunrise, which is part of nature and thus connected to the divine, helps Corrie retain her link with God even though nothing about the camp seems connected with Him.

Corrie is also thankful to be reunited with other women, but she realizes that she takes on the worries and griefs of the others, especially those who have male relatives in another section of the camp. Executions there are frequent, and every time a shot is heard everyone is filled with anguish.

Even though all this worry is stressful for Corrie, it's emblematic of her deep empathy and the value with which she imbues other people's lives—the impulses that have led to her lifesaving work.

At the same time, the factory workers laugh and entertain themselves, often by imitating the guards. They have coordinated signals to announce the imminent arrival of an officer so that everyone can get back to their bench in time.

The high morale among the workers emblematizes human resilience, especially within strong and supportive communities.

Corrie hopes that she and Betsie might be released in September, as six months is the usual term for ration card stealing (their official charge). Betsie warns her not to get her hopes up, but Corrie thinks that her sister truly doesn't mind the circumstances at the camp. Every day she prays and reads the **Bible** with the other women in her work crew, and this work is as satisfying to her as anything else.

As they spend more and more time at camp, Corrie begins to truly value Betsie as a spiritual role model, both because she's so able to forgive those who guide her and because her faith in God is so strong that she can function with extreme tranquility within the camp.


Soon, rumors fly that a Dutch brigade is moving through France, soon to reclaim the country. The guards are tense and angry, beating people for minor infractions. Executions in the men's section are more and more common. One night the prisoners wake up to explosions in the sky. Corrie and Betsie are already planning to return to the Beje and clean it up, but the foreman at the factory says that the noises are mostly likely Germans blowing up bridges. They must be anticipating an attack, but it probably won't come for weeks.

This sequence of events, especially the nighttime bombings, is reminiscent of the unrest and unease when Germany first attacked Holland. This contributes to the sense that Corrie and Betsie's lives follow a pattern, and that the things they've endured before were part of a deliberate preparation for what they are enduring now.

That afternoon, everyone is ordered to return to the dormitories early. No orders are given to the women, and they stand about in groups speculating. However, on the men's section of the camp rifle fire starts up and goes on for hours; more than seven hundred men are killed. All the women begin to weep, wondering if their relatives have made it out alive.

The women's agony, and their ability to hear their husbands' executions even as they are separated, throws into stark relief the horror of familial separation, one of the hallmarks of Nazi persecution.

The next morning, the women are ordered to pack up their possessions. Corrie and Betsie gather their toothbrushes, needles, a small bottle of vitamin oil, Nollie's sweater, and the **Bible**. They're given blankets and marched away from the camp at a fast pace; Betsie, thin and physically weakened, can barely keep up. At the train tracks, they are packed into a cattle car with eighty other women, all sobbing and confused. Betsie says she is thankful that Father is dead and spared this experience.

Even though this new development seems worse than anything that's come before, Betsie manages to see it in the most positive light. In her view, the circumstances are a benevolent act of God rather than evidence against God's existence.

After hours of waiting, the train begins to move slowly and jerkily. Corrie sits with Betsie's head in her lap; her sister's forehead feels feverish. At one point a hail of machine gun fire strikes the train and they hope for rescue, but at dawn the train crosses the border into Germany.

This hellish journey mirrors the family's departure from Haarlem, which Corrie saw in her vision—in both cases their fates are out of their hands, and they have no idea what is coming next.

RAVENSBRUCK

For two more days, the train crawls through Germany. Some loaves of bread have been placed in the train and the women pass them around, but there's no way for the women to relieve themselves and the air stinks. After a while, thirst becomes the dominant concern of the women. Every once in a while, a guard pushes a pail of water in the door, but without any plan or cohesion those nearest drink it all.

Corrie presents unspeakable conditions like this as the end result of intolerance—when Nazis start by denying the essential humanity between all people, they end up treating people as if they aren't human at all.

After four days, the train car is opened, and the women crawl out on cramped knees. They're near a lake, with a church on the other side. Some women bring buckets of water for the weak to drink. After a while, the guards—some of them barely more than girls—arrange them in a column and march them down a road. On their way, they pass by local people who seem extraordinarily strong and healthy. The children look at the prisoners with interest, but the adults avert their eyes.

The contrast between the prisoners and the bystanders is striking. Even though it's unlikely that the people could do very much to help them, it's also clear that they feel a sense of guilt, which they attempt to avoid by refusing to contemplate the injustice in their midst.

Eventually, an enormous camp comes into view. The women realize with horror that this is Ravensbruck, the "notorious women's extermination camp." As they approach, Corrie thinks about the **Bible** concealed inside her clothes. It seems unimaginable that God designed his teachings for this cruel world.

Although Corrie now sees Ravensbruck as totally disconnected from the Bible, she will inevitably come to believe that the Bible gives her exactly the tools to meet this challenge.

Marching into the gates, the women wash off in outdoor spigots, surrounding by a squad of guards shouting and swinging their whips. The guards prod them to a large canvas tent, covered with straw. Corrie sinks down, but immediately realizes that the straw is covered with lice. Still, there's nowhere else to sleep, so they're forced to endure it. The women pass around a pair of scissors and take turns cutting each other's hair.

Again, Corrie, Betsie, and the other women are treated literally as if they were animals, forced to sleep outside in the straw. However, they manage to combat this denigration with small communal actions, like sharing the scissors in order to mitigate the effect of the lice.

However, at some point the guards drive the women out of the tent, forcing them to lay out their blankets on the hard, unprotected ground. Everyone is distraught, but Betsie starts to sing a hymn in her high, clear voice. The other women join in shakily. In the middle of the night, it starts raining; by morning everyone is soaked and covered in mud.

This is a desperate situation, and Betsie's hymn singing can't improve it in any concrete way. However, by inducing the women to join together she creates a sense of community and solidarity.

For two days the women have to stand outside all day and sleep in the mud. Betsie develops a harsh cough and intestinal cramps, which Corrie tries to soothe by wrapping her in Nollie's sweater and feeding her drops of vitamin oil. However, when they're finally taken inside for processing, Corrie sees that each woman has to give up her personal belongs, strip down, and walk past the male guards into the shower room.

This new indignity is one of the disasters Corrie mentions in the first chapter. Since the reader is hearing about it for the second time, it creates the sense that this "must" happen, that it is part of a God-given plan for Corrie and Betsie's lives.

Corrie knows that Betsie needs the vitamin oil, and she desperately wants to save her **Bible**. She begins to pray, but suddenly Betsie staggers; it seems like she's about to faint. Corrie asks permission to use the toilets, and a guard snaps at her to use the drain holes in the shower room. Unwatched in the room, Corrie sees a pile of benches; she quickly hides the sweater, vitamin oil, and Bible under them. When she and Betsie are finally admitted to the shower room, they can hide their possessions under their new prison dresses.

Corrie manages to save her most important physical possessions—the sweater and the vitamin oil—as the well as the Bible, which gives her emotional comfort. This action creates an equivalency between the earthly and the spiritual sustenance that the respective objects provide.

Corrie worries that the **Bible** is visible under her dress, but she decides to trust in God's protection. On her way out, the guards body search every woman, but somehow they forget about Corrie and the Bible passes unnoticed. Corrie arrives in another set of temporary barracks "bringing not only the Bible, but a new knowledge of the power of Him whose story it was." She has to share a bunk with Betsie and three other women, but she's glad of the body heat and the ability to sleep inside.

Corrie sees the guards' oversight as an act of divine intervention. Just a few days ago she thought that Ravensbruck could have nothing to do with God or the Bible, but now she feels that it has given her an enlightening experience and revived her faith.

Every morning at 4:30, all the women have to gather outside for an excruciatingly long roll call, during which they can hear screams of the prisoners in the nearby punishment barracks. Corrie feels that nothing makes sense, that there is too much suffering to understand. However, she also feels a deep sense of purpose, as she and Betsie spend every available moment sharing the **Bible** and leading prayers among the desperate and demoralized women. She feels that she lives two separate lives in Ravensbruck—on the tangible level, she is suffering and starving, but in "the life we lived with God," things "grew daily better, truth upon truth, glory upon glory."

Even though her circumstances are terrible, Corrie feels a new sense of purpose as she and Betsie encourage faith among the women. This feeling helps her see imprisonment as God's way of helping her grow in her faith, rather than as a punishment or a human disaster independent of God. However, although she can rationalize her personal suffering, she can't explain why God allowed the camps to occur in the first place and permitted the other women—most of whom don't seem to feel it's a morally enlightening experience—to suffer there as well.

Corrie has always believed in the **Bible**, but reading it now she feels she doesn't even have to try to have faith—rather, the book is "simply a description of the way things are." For example, she's read many times about Jesus's arrest and humiliation at the hands of the Romans, but she now identifies personally with this story, especially on Fridays when everyone has to strip naked for an interminable medical examination, watched by male guards. One morning, Corrie realizes that Jesus's captors took his clothes away from him, too.

Throughout the novel Corrie has wondered how to follow religious teachings when the world seems to diverge from the Bible and turn towards evil. Now she realizes that the problems she's confronting—maintaining dignity in the midst of persecution, sacrificing oneself for others, responding to suffering—are all part of Christ's life. To her, it seems like her life now is closer to the reality of the Bible than her life in peacetime.

Eventually, the prisoners are moved from temporary barracks to permanent ones. Corrie hopes that the move will bring a better quality of life—maybe even a nurse to cure Betsie's cough, as the vitamin oil is running low. However, when they finally arrive at Barracks 28, they see that the building is filthy, smells rancid, and is missing half its windows. Inside are just enormous bunks piled three high.

This passage emphasizes the enormous contrast between Corrie's appalling physical circumstances and the moral revelations she is experiencing as a result of imprisonment.

Corrie discovers the bunks are infested with fleas and asks Betsie how they can possibly live here, but her sister simply asks God to "show us how." She tells Corrie that the **Bible** passage they were reading just that morning tells them to "pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances." Corrie points out that there's nothing to be thankful for, but Betsie reminds her that they've been assigned there together, and that they've still have their Bible. She goes on to thank God sincerely for the fleas; when Corrie protests, she responds that the Bible says to give thanks in "all circumstances," not just "pleasant circumstances."

Betsie's tranquil response to the ever-worsening conditions of the camp serves as an example of religious faith to the reader, but Corrie's doubts and inability to pray with complete sincerity is much more relatable and compelling. This passage is a reminder that one can aspire to religious purity, embodied by Betsie, without always succeeding in living up to it.

When the other women in Barracks 28 arrive home exhausted from hard labor, they are not pleased to share their quarters with new arrivals. The building is so overcrowded that the beds sometimes break, sending their occupants crashing down into the next level. The women are constantly quarreling, and there's not even a common language in which to communicate.

This is the first time that Corrie and Betsie have encountered real strife among prisoners. This is a reflection of the truly dire conditions at Ravensbruck; but to them it's also a sign that their presence might do some good.

As Corrie tries to sleep, a group of women are slapping each other in a dispute as to whether the window should be closed or shut. Betsie starts to pray loudly, asking God to "send Your peace into this room." Eventually, the noise dies down and the women agree to leave the window half-open. Corrie gives thanks for Betsie's presence.

Whether or not the women relate to the Christian spirit of Betsie's prayer or are happy to hear a calm voice, it seems that Betsie's invocation of a peaceful and loving God has brought some tranquility and greater cohesion to the room.

Here as well the prisoners have to get up before dawn for roll call, which takes place in the increasingly cold square outside the barracks. Everyone is assigned to work crews, and for weeks Betsie and Corrie work in a Siemans factory just outside the camp, doing miserably hard labor that leaves them weak and exhausted. As they shuffle back to the camp at the end of the day, the local people avoid looking at them.

Corrie has spent her entire memoir arguing that ordinary people can and should be active in the fight against injustice; in this light her description of the local people seems like a tacit indictment, suggesting that rather than being completely powerless they choose to be bystanders.

At the camp they line up for their meager dinner and return to the barracks, where Betsie and Corrie lead a nightly prayer service. Each night women from different Christian denominations share hymns, chants, and songs. Afterwards, Betsie reads aloud from the **Bible**, while other women translate the text into different languages. At such times, Corrie thinks about the many different churches in Haarlem, each fenced off from the others, and concludes that "in darkness God's truth shines most clear." For some reason, the guards never enter the dormitory room and catch the women during their service—Corrie is puzzled by this lack of surveillance.

Again, the Bible is a harbinger of solidarity—if not between different religions, at least between different sects. Like most of the book's compelling religious experiences, this one arises from the intertwining of different faiths. Corrie interprets the beauty of these impromptu circumstances as another sign that her imprisonment is part of God's benevolent plan.

Meanwhile, the vitamin oil bottle, which should have been empty long ago, is still issuing drops of oil. This is especially astounding because Betsie is sharing it with many of the other women, although Corrie is always tempted to hoard it and prioritize her sister's health. Betsie compares this to a **Bible** story in which a faithful woman's oil jar is never empty, but Corrie doesn't think this is an adequate explanation.

Even though Corrie has just said that her life seems to uncannily echo events in the Bible, she doubts Betsie's interpretation of this development as an actual miracle. Even she is sometimes unwilling to see events as God's personal intervention.

One day, a young Dutch woman who works in the hospital and often steals supplies brings a sack of yeast compound, which can function as a vitamin, to the barracks. Corrie decides to save the yeast until the bottle is finally empty, but that night it won't produce a single drop.

Just as Corrie received a Bible from Nollie after she gave away all her Gospels, she gets more vitamins exactly when she needs them. In her eyes this is a sign that God will always provide the resources that are truly needed.

As winter approaches all the prisoners are issued coats, and Betsie and Corrie are transferred to another work crew, digging up the ground outside the camp wall. This too is grueling labor, and Betsie especially stumbles frequently and is only able to carry tiny amounts of dirt. One day a guard notices her feeble efforts and shouts at her tauntingly, calling her "Madame Baroness" and prodding her to work faster. Corrie feels like she could kill this woman, but Betsie just laughs, admitting that she is too weak to be a good worker. The young guard hits Betsie with her crop and Corrie almost rushes at her before Betsie stops her. Blood is pooling on Betsie's cheek, but she tells Corrie to "look at Jesus only."

This scene echoes the Biblical episode in which Roman soldiers taunt Christ on his way to execution. In both cases, a victim—Christ and Betsie—is forced to do hard labor while hostile soldiers look on. In both cases, a soldier decides to add insult to injury by taunting the victim. Here, Betsie aligns herself with Christ by literally "turning the other cheek" after being hit, just as he did and encouraged his supporters to do. Refusing to be denigrated, Betsie makes this experience into a moment of closeness to Christ.

Betsie begins to cough up blood, but her fever is too low for admittance into the hospital. Corrie hates going to the hospital ward, which is full of the sickest and most suffering women, but Betsie sees it just as another "setting in which to talk about Jesus." No matter where she is, she always speaks to the people around her about "His nearness and His yearning to come into their lives."

For Betsie, going to the hospital is another inspiration to continue in her ministry. For Corrie—perhaps more reasonably—it is an event that makes leads her to ask again exactly why God would want people to suffer like this.

At last, Betsie's fever becomes high enough and she's admitted into the hospital. Reluctantly, Corrie leaves her there and goes back to the barracks, where other women are conducting the service in their place. As she climbs into her bunk, she reflects on the improvement Betsie has wrought on the barracks –the women are polite and kind to each other since her arrival. Still, even packed in with so many people, Corrie feels "miserably alone."

Even though Corrie is pleased with the increased solidarity within the barracks, this is not a substitute for being with her beloved family. Betsie's absence is reminder that her bond with her sister is the most important relationship in her life, outside of which she doesn't really know how to function.

THE BLUE SWEATER

Corrie is not allowed to visit the hospital, but a few days later she sneaks in the back entrance. Hoisting herself through the window, she smells the rank toilets and sees, to her shock, a dozen naked bodies stacked against the wall. She dashes through the hospital until she finds Betsie sitting up in a cot—she's still thin and hasn't seen a doctor, but has regained some strength through rest.

The stark reality of the corpses, and the inhumanity with which they are treated, contrast with Betsie's return to health and the spiritual tranquility which she emanates.

Three days later—still without any medical attention—Betsie's fever subsides and she returns to Barracks 28. Fortunately, she's assigned to a crew of women who knit socks for German soldiers, meaning she can work inside. Every day she finishes her sock quota before noon and spends the rest of the day reading to the other women from the **Bible** and leading prayers.

Even though Betsie doesn't have to do any of this work, she undertakes it willingly and without a second thought. Corrie presents her sister's ministry much as she does her own activism—as a result of explicit and specific moral choices.

One day, Betsie is waiting for Corrie when she returns home from her day's shift, looking pleased and excited. She's found out that the guards are so reluctant to enter the women's dormitory because of the swarming fleas. These vermin, which Corrie reviles, are actually the reason they are able to lead prayer services in safety.

Corrie didn't take her sister seriously when she thanked God for the fleas, but now they both feel that even these vermin—like many other seeming misfortunes—are really a divine gift, as they have allowed the women to worship in peace.

One morning during role call, a mentally disabled girl suddenly soils herself, and a particularly vicious guard, nicknamed The Snake, starts beating her. Whispering to Betsie, Corrie wonders aloud if they can open a home after the war to help traumatized people like this. Betsie replies that she prays for this every day. It's only later that Corrie realizes that while she was speaking of the prisoners, Betsie has been thinking about the guards.

It's not Corrie's first impulse to forgive the guards or think about their rehabilitation; yet, after the war, she strongly will go on to promote forgiveness and reconciliation. She embraces and works towards the teachings she gets from Betsie and considers morally correct, even when they don't reflect her personal instincts.

Soon after, Corrie is ordered to a medical inspection. She's pronounced healthy enough for transfer to a munitions factory, which is considered a boon, as conditions are much better there. However, she doesn't want to be separated from Betsie. She pleads with a doctor, who relents and gives her a pass to be fitted for eyeglasses the next morning, at exactly the same time that the transport convoy leaves.

Obviously, proximity to family is much more important to Corrie than physical conditions. Even though the doctor is an active participant in Nazi persecution, by helping Corrie she exhibits a sliver of common humanity—it's this kind of experience that leads Corrie to advocate for former Nazis after the war.

Since Corrie's entire work crew has been disbanded, the guards assign her to the knitting crew. She's thankful for this, as she gets to spend all day with Betsie, praying and studying the **Bible**. The women become "the praying heart of the vast diseased body that was Ravensbruck," trying to "intercede" for prisoners and even the guards.

Already, Betsie is discussing her ideas of forgiveness with the other women. She is laying the groundwork for the reconciliation endeavors Corrie will lead after the war.

During this time, Corrie feels that God is speaking to her about her purpose after the war. Betsie wants to have a large house where concentration camp survivors can come for rest and rehabilitation. She imagines floors of inlaid wood, a broad staircase, and luxurious gardens. Corrie is amazed to hear Betsie describe these things as if they already exist and aren't just a product of imagination and hope.

Betsie's specific descriptions of the house she wants to set up will resurface later as evidence of her uncanny foresight, when Corrie actually visits a home that she will transform into a rehabilitation center.

One morning during roll call, Corrie sees hospital nurses loading patients into a truck. She's known for a long time that the sickest people are sent to "the brick building at the foot of the great square smoke stack," but she's never seen it happening with her own eyes, and now she's finally forced to understand what's happening. She can't believe that the nurses, some of whom treat the patients very kindly, are coolly sending them to their deaths.

It's hard to reconcile the appearance—or even the unfeigned existence—of humanity, even tenderness, on the part of the nurses with their wholehearted commitment to Nazi ideology. Most people, Corrie comes to believes, are constantly making a series of good and bad choices, especially in times of crisis like this.

As winter approaches, cold becomes a constant concern and Corrie feels "the temptation to think only of oneself" grow stronger. For example, she knows that if she wriggles into the middle of the group during roll call, she'll be protected from the wind. To evade her guilt for forcing others to stand on the end, she comes up with many justifications, for example telling herself that she's just acting on behalf of Betsie. She feels angry when other women take the yeast compound, which she wants to save for Betsie.

Corrie has always behaved charitably and selflessly towards others, but this is the first time she has to practice these principles when doing so actively disadvantages herself or Betsie. Her dread of what she sees as her own moral decline shows that losing one's prewar principles is the ultimate defeat in the face of Nazi persecution.


As a result, Corrie feels that her prayers have become less sincere and meaningless. However, one day she reads a story about Saint Paul, who was unable to overcome his own weaknesses until he learned to rely on God completely and realized that the "wonders and miracles that followed his ministry" all came from Christ's personal intervention. That night, Corrie humbly confesses her feelings of self-centeredness to the prayer group, and "real joy" comes back to her prayers.

In confessing what she perceives as her sins—even though they're no more than fairly understandable self-interest—she's entrusting herself both to God and the women around her, thus reaffirming her place both in the religious order and the small community within her barracks.


The cold is now affecting Betsie's legs—sometimes she is too weak and stiff to walk. One day Betsie wakes up unable to move at all, and Corrie has to carry her to roll call. The next day, Corrie begs the Snake, the guard on duty, for help; after roll call, she finds that The Snake has summoned nurses to carry Corrie to the hospital, so that she doesn't have to stand in the sick call line. In between coughs, Betsie reminds Corrie about the house they're going to have after the war, and even tells her confusedly about a concentration camp where "we're in charge."

Corrie has last mentioned the Snake when she was viciously beating a disabled girl; however, now she's performing an unexpected act of kindness. Just as seemingly perfect people have faults, seemingly irredeemable villains also have a conscious and are sometimes able to make good moral choices. Corrie doesn't really understand what Betsie is saying now, but these phrases will make sense during her life after the war.


Corrie walks with Betsie to the hospital. Betsie urgently says that Corrie must keep telling people what they have learned at Ravensbruck, "that there is no pit so deep that [God] is not deeper still." Bewildered, Corrie asks when all of this will happen, and Betsie says that by the new year they will be out of prison.

Again, Betsie is choosing to interpret her awful experience at Ravensbruck as evidence of God's power and his closeness to every human.

At noon, Corrie asks the Snake for a pass and visits Betsie briefly. However, she can't go again that day because other guards are on duty. After the evening meal, she sneaks to the hospital and looks in the window. In Betsie's bed, she sees what looks like an ivory carving, its teeth visible through the cheeks. After a moment, she realizes that this is Betsie, already dead, and that the nurses are preparing to carry her away.

The fact that Corrie can't initially recognize Betsie signifies the ultimate aim of Nazi intolerance—by treating people as less than human, they figuratively transform them into objects, like the "carving" that Corrie sees lying on the bed.

In shock, Corrie walks aimlessly away from the hospital. After a while, the girl who once brought the yeast compound runs up to her urgently and brings her back to the hospital. She shows her Betsie's body, and Corrie sees that her sister's face is restored to its youthful health, with "the care lines, the grief lines, the deep hollows of hunger and illness" wiped away. The nurse and the girl stand by as Corrie surveys this miracle. On her way out, she stoops to pick up the old blue sweater Betsie had been wearing, but it's full of lice and the girl warns her away from it.

To Corrie, the transfiguration of Betsie's face from barely human to angelic and pure is nothing less than a miracle—just like the return of Mama's voice during Nollie's long-ago wedding. The miracle reminds her of her faith in God and her deep rootedness in her family; however, giving up the sweater is a poignant indicator that now she's finally on her own.


THE THREE VISIONS

This miracle helps sustain Corrie through her grief over her sister. Several days later, she's called aside during roll call. She wonders if someone has reported her clandestine **Bible**, but after roll call a guard takes her to the administrative building where an officer is giving release papers to a group of women. In a daze, Corrie receives her own certificate of discharge. However, at the release examination Corrie is diagnosed with edema and ordered to the hospital. Apparently, prisoners are only released if they are in good physical condition.

The fact that the camp won't release Corrie if she looks maltreated suggests that its leaders feel some sense of shame—if not actual guilt—about what they are doing. It's remarkable that the atrocities of Ravensbruck both defy social norms and absurdly seek to comply with them.

Corrie is taken to a dismal ward of the hospital, crammed among sick and filthy women. She feels that this is the worst suffering she has seen in her time at Ravensbruck. Nurses mock suffering patients, and prisoners themselves have become indifferent to others around them. Corrie starts bringing bedpans around the ward, as no one else will do it, and is devastated to see the gratitude expressed by patients for these basic kindnesses. While she is waiting for her swollen legs to heal, Corrie finds a young Dutch woman to whom she bequeaths her **Bible**.

After her sister's death, Corrie is starting to take on Betsie's character, turning even the worst of situations into an opportunity to fulfill God's will and minister to others. Again, the cruelty of the comparatively powerful nurses contrasts with the meek suffering of the hospital patients.


Corrie becomes accustomed to distributing the bedpans, but one night two women hide them under their own beds. Corrie pleads with them to share, but one of them takes off a dirty bandage and throws it in Corrie's face. Distraught, Corrie runs down the hall to wash herself, vowing that she'll never try to help these people again. However, after she collects herself, she takes up the chore again, reflecting that Ravensbruck has taught her much "about what I could and could not bear."

For Corrie, the hardest part of imprisonment is not enduring abuse from guards but seeing other prisoners succumb to the inhumanity around them. In this sense, her work at the camp isn't so much about promoting religion as preserving the principles to which the women adhered in their lives before the concentration camp.

The next morning, Corrie is pronounced fit to leave. She's given an outfit of regular clothes and the valuables she surrendered on entrance, a few ration coupons, and ordered to sign a form swearing that she's been treated well at Ravensbruck. With a group of other women, she leaves the camp gates and finds herself on a little hill overlooking a church and picturesque lake. At the train station, the guard escorts the group to the train to Berlin and leaves.

It's shocking to think that the horrors of Ravensbruck are unfolding in the midst of such a bucolic landscape. It's notable that Corrie mentions a church—this seems to suggest that the mere rituals of religion do not guarantee moral rectitude, if people aren't practicing its principles in their everyday lives.

After a long and confusing trip, Corrie arrives at a bombed-out station in Berlin. Just as Betsie said, it's New Year's Day. With the help of an elderly worker, Corrie finds the train to Holland and boards it. It leaves after several hours, but the trip is slow and seems like it will never end. Corrie is unable to buy any food, as she realizes she's lost her ration coupons at some point during the journey.

This is the first of Betsie's predictions to come true, causing Corrie to believe that, due to her exceptional character, her sister had some sort of divine insight into what was going to happen after her death.

At Groningen, a Dutch city near the border, Corrie finally disembarks the train and stumbles to the nearest hospital. A kindly nurse takes her in and feeds her bread and tea, careful not to tax her stomach with rich foods like butter. She gives Corrie a staff room and runs a bath for her. Corrie starts crying at the woman's kindness. After her bath, she gets into bed—the first time she's slept on real sheets in several months.

The kindness of the nurse here contrasts with the blind cruelty of the nurses at Ravensbruck. Corrie isn't crying about the physical amenities, like sheets or baths, but rather the return to human decency and respect that they represent.

Corrie stays at the hospital for ten days, well taken care of by the nurses. The first time she joins them at dinner she feels bewildered by the formal table settings and cheerful atmosphere. It's hard to remember that she used to eat like this as well, every day of her life.

Feeling unable to eat at a table, one of the basic activities of her entire life, is a stark reminder of how dehumanizing life at Ravensbruck really is.

There's a ban on travel within Holland, but the hospital arranges for Corrie to get a ride south on a food truck. She arrives at Willem's house at dawn, to be enveloped in embraces by her brother, Tine, and their children. They are saddened to hear of Betsie's death, and share another piece of bad news—there's been no news of Kik since his deportation, and Willem has no idea if he's even alive.

Even though Corrie is relieved to be reunited by her family, it's terrible to hear of her nephew's deportation. Even though the war may be drawing to an end, the family structure will never return to its prewar state.

Corrie spends several days in Willem's house, which is full of elderly people and young men hiding from conscription. Still, she's anxious to get home to the Beje, and Willem asks Pickwick to drive her there. Corrie's old friend waves aside her recollections of the terrible wounds he received in prison and updates her on the Dutch underground—Corrie's group is still in operation, although many of its young men are now in hiding. He warns her to be prepared when she gets to the Beje; while Toos has bravely kept the watch shop going, several homeless families have been housed there as well and it's in bad repair.

It's cheering to Corrie that the underground is still operating—even though her own work was disrupted, the survival of the operation she built makes all her trials seem worthwhile. The physical disrepair of the Beje is a physical indicator of the tragic changes that have occurred in the family since their original imprisonment.

When Corrie finally arrives at the Beje, she finds Nollie and her daughters cleaning it thoroughly. With her sister and Toos she walks through the house, remembering all the meals and fond evenings they shared with Betsie and Father there.

Nollie's helpfulness and Toos's stolid loyalty are a reminder of the values to which her family and network have always adhered, and which will survive the war intact.

In some ways, Corrie slips back into her old life—she repairs watches in the morning and bicycles to Nollie's house in the afternoon. At the same time, she feels that something is missing, and the Beje has never seemed so empty. She decides to open it up to mentally disabled children, most of whom have been sequestered at home since the beginning of occupation, for fear of Nazi persecution. She gives them the run of the house and devises an instructional program.

Here, Corrie is actively refuting Lieutenant Rahms's remark about the unworthiness of the mentally disabled. She's also pointing out, again, that intolerance of specific groups always leads to general intolerance, and thus threatens the entire body of society.

Still, Corrie is often restless. She feels that Betsie's presence is necessary for the Beje to truly feel like home. When the national underground asks Corrie to take a set of false release papers to the Haarlem jail she assents eagerly, grasping at the sense of purpose. However, when she gets to the jail and sees Rolf, she starts to greet him as an old friend before realizing that doing so puts them both in danger. After that afternoon, she realizes that her time in the underground is done, and that "whatever bravery or skill" she's ever had are "loans" from God rather than innate virtues.

Throughout the memoir Corrie has honed her skills as an activist and underground leader, but now she finds they have abandoned her. Whether or not this is a result of God collecting his "loans," it's a sign of how much she has changed since her imprisonment, and that her purpose in life must accordingly change.

That afternoon, Corrie remembers Betsie's final injunction to "tell people…what we learned." She decides that this is God's new purpose for her. She travels among churches and clubs, speaking about her experiences in Ravensbruck and the religious truths she learned there. She also speaks of Betsie's vision of founding a rehabilitation center here in Holland. After one such talk, a wealthy widow approaches Corrie and offers a large house outside the city for the project.

After Betsie's death, Corrie is trying to live out not just Biblical principles but her sister's own dreams. In some sense, Betsie is Corrie's conduit to the divine—she interprets her sister's remarkable behavior as stemming from divine inspiration, and thus a divine guide as to what she should do with her life.

Two weeks later, Corrie goes to visit the house. It seems just like the place that Betsie described, down to the inlaid floors. The widow is surprised to hear Corrie describe these features of the house even before entering and asks if she's visited before. Corrie says that she's just heard about it, "from someone who's been here."

The house's uncanny similarity to the place that Betsie described is evidence, to Corrie, that her sister had some sort of premonition of this event, and thus that their experiences at the concentration camps were part of God's plan.

In May, the Allies recapture Holland. Hundreds of people start making their way to the home Corrie has organized. Some of them, like Mrs. Kan (whose husband has died) are former acquaintances. Others are "scarred body and soul by bombing raids or loss of family." The home proves the perfect setting for recovery, as people are able to care for each other and spend time in a tranquil environment.

Just as Corrie provides one kind of refuge after the war, she provides another kind afterwards. In her rehabilitation home she not only promotes tolerance but tries to undo the dehumanization effected by the Nazis. A large communal home with a positive purpose, her center is the moral opposite of the concentration camp.

One of the most important aspects of recovery is forgiving those who have hurt them. Most survivors are less angry at the German soldiers than at Dutch collaborators. These people, many of them former members of the NSB, are now shunned and reviled by the general society.

Although Betsie was ready forgive anyone that offended her, the majority of society—unsurprisingly—is not. It seems near impossible to put aside the betrayals and humiliations that occurred during the war.

Corrie wants to invite these people to the home as well, but doing so always causes fights with the survivors. Instead, she makes the Beje into a home for former NSB members. During the years after the war, Corrie superintends these two projects, experimenting with new treatments and coordinating the doctors and psychiatrists that treat patients free of charge. She's reluctant to impose any rules or constraints on her patients, not wanting to recall the conditions of concentration camp life.

Corrie quickly realizes that she can't pursue the task of reconciliation in such a straightforward way—rather, she must allow people to forgive their enemies at their own pace. Giving up the Beje to NSB members, she shows her willingness to help anyone that society doesn't tolerate, whatever their moral value.

Corrie feels rewarded to see people gradually overcoming their trauma. As Betsie had imagined, they often resolve their grief by working in the garden. As they become mentally and physically stronger, Corrie always tells the patients about the NSB-ers living in the Beje, who never have visitors or mail. When the residents no longer express hostility towards these people—and sometimes even offer them produce from the garden—Corrie knows that "the miracle has taken place."

Corrie encourages the people at her home to recognize their advantages—the sense of community, their journey towards healing—and compare them to the wretched situation of the NSB-ers. This is similar to the mindset that she practices herself, especially when she's called upon to help people that she doesn't particularly like.

Corrie also works as a public speaker, partly to generate funds for the home and partly to share Betsie's story with more people. She travels all over the world, but finds that her work is most meaningful in Germany itself, where poverty and destruction are rampant and people are desperate for any hope.

Even though Corrie says that her bravery and ingenuity were just wartime "loans" from God, it's clear that she's cultivating those attributes again—just in a slightly different sphere.

At a church service in Munich, Corrie recognizes a former guard from Ravensbruck. Seeing him makes her remember all the indignity and suffering that she and Betsie endured during her imprisonment. The man comes up to express his gratitude to Corrie, saying that God has "washed my sins away." He wants to shake her hand, but even though she has been preaching about the importance of forgiveness, Corrie doesn't know if she can.

Although Corrie's dilemma concerns her own ability to forgive, the most troubling aspect of this episode is the guard's assertion that his sins have vanished. While Corrie promotes reconciliation, she doesn't say that forgiveness absolves people from moral responsibility. This conclusion is a wishful and wrongheaded one on the guard's part.

Corrie prays to Jesus for help forgiving the guard. Still, she can't raise her hand. Again praying silently, she asks Jesus to "give Your forgiveness" to the man instead. Suddenly, warmth flows through her arm, which rises to meet the guard's; she feels overcome by "a love for this stranger." She realizes that forgiveness comes not from her, but from the help that Jesus provides people.

By trying to forgive even when it seems impossible, Corrie feels that she has connected directly with Christ. Forgiveness is not just an act of mercy to the guard, but also a moment in which Corrie herself feels connected to the divine.

Corrie is particularly compelled by families living in abandoned factories, due to the housing shortage. During the months she spends working with them, a relief organization asks her to supervise a new rehabilitation center in Germany, much like the one she opened in Holland. They've acquired a former concentration camp which they plan to convert into a group home. Corrie visits the enclosure, which is still surrounded by barbed wire. Looking around the desolate scene, she briskly announces that there will have to be window boxes, and that they will paint each building a cheerful spring color.

This new development fulfills Betsie's last prediction, that there will one day be "a concentration camp where we are in charge." The act of taking over a former camp represents what Corrie sees as the transformation from intolerance and persecution to inclusivity and nurturing—a moment when people can overcome human flaws and work together towards God's will.

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