

# Her Story Silhouette by Shari House

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## Carrie ten Boom

### Christian Speaker

Life Span: 1892 - 1983

Nationality: Dutch



## Silhouette:

Corrie ten Boom was born in Haarlem, Holland on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 1892. She was raised in a God-fearing home and was the youngest of four siblings. Her father was a watchmaker, and Corrie followed in his profession becoming the first woman in Holland to qualify as a watchmaker. From the age of 29 to 48, Corrie ran the Haarlem Girl's Clubs that focused not only on things like gymnastics, music, and camping, but also taught the girls about God's love and the importance of having a personal walk with the Lord. She also ran a club for intellectually handicapped children and found joy in helping others. Many of her girls drew strength from their faith in God and from the things she had taught them during the terrible years that lay ahead.



On May 10, 1940, Germany invaded Holland when Corrie was 48 years old. As the persecution of Jews began, Corrie and her family helped in any way they could – giving a bowl of soup here or a small amount of money there. As the situation grew worse, there was more need, and eventually Corrie and her family began the dangerous underground

work of housing and relocating Jews to safer places. They had a false wall built in one of the upstairs rooms to hide the Jews and found ways to get ration cards and false identifications made. They knew they would eventually be found out, but they helped each one the Lord brought to their door. One day Corrie was tricked by someone pretending to need money to help the Jews, and on February 28, 1944, the ten Boom family was arrested. Corrie was thrown in prison at Scheveningen, unaware of what had happened to her other family members. In June she was reunited with her sister, Betsie, when they were moved to a labor camp at Vught. In September they were taken to Ravensbruck concentration camp in Germany. This is where their real "hell on earth" began.



The sisters faced many, many hardships and were treated as animals. They were stripped of their dignity, made to do hard labor from before sunup to after sundown, and were forced to stand for hours at attention in the rain. They were housed in quarters made for 400, yet there were 1,400 in their barrack alone and 35,000 women in total at the camp. Their beds were infested with fleas, the food they were given was meager and putrid, and there was no medical care to speak of. The billowing smoke from the tall chimney above the ovens in the center of the camp, where the bodies of those who had been gassed for one reason or another were burned, was always in their sight. In all this despair and degradation, Corrie and her sister tried their best to be a witness for Christ and proclaim the love of God. They would hold Bible studies using a small Bible they had smuggled in their clothes, and they prayed for and with many of the

women who lived in utter despair and without any hope. Even in this horrible place, the light of God shone through the efforts of Corrie and her sister.

Only once did Corrie begin to waver in her faith . . . when her sister Betsie died just before Christmas. Her sister, though weak in body, had been such a great source of strength for her and the other women. It was she who told Corrie, "We must tell people how good God is. After the war we must go around the world telling people. No one will be able to say that they have suffered worse than us. We can tell them how wonderful God is, and how His love will fill our lives, if only we will give up our hatred and bitterness."

One week later, on December 31, 1944, when Corrie was 52 years old, she was ordered to report after the roll-call. She was fearful that she'd be whipped or punished or even shot. Instead, when she came to the office, she was given a card stamped "Entlassen" - "Released." Corrie could not believe she was free and later found out she was released due to a clerical error. The very next week, all the ladies her age were sent to the gas chamber.

Almost immediately upon Corrie's release and recovery, she set about trying to help other victims. A large house was given to her where she set up a Christian rehabilitation center for war victims. She spent the next 30 years traveling the world telling people of the horrors the prisoners endured and the love of God that could root out any bitterness and make them whole. She visited over 60 countries including Russia and other communist countries, and when she went, she always tried to visit the prisons. She wrote her story down in a book called "The Hiding Place" which eventually was made into a movie, and in 1968 she was honored by the State of Israel for her work in aiding the Jewish people.



Corrie ten Boom died on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 1983, on her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday. She was a very normal person who went through a horrific ordeal, and because she did not let it entrap her into a life of bitterness, the Lord was able to use her extraordinarily to minister to the hearts and change the lives of untold thousands. She is truly a woman of whom it could be said, "**She hath done what she could!**"

## *Her Story/My Story:*

At a meeting where Corrie was speaking soon after the war, she came face to face with one of the German prison guards from the camp. This particular guard happened to be one she and Betsie had to strip down in front of. He had become a Christian and he came up to her after her talk and asked to shake her hand. The feelings that came over her were almost more than she could bear, and she found herself praying, "Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness." The love that swept over her heart in that moment almost took her breath away. She found she did have love in her heart for this man who had so wronged her. There was forgiveness in her heart that God had put there that she could give to this man. She was able to embrace his handshake, and once again feel the freedom that only comes with forgiveness and letting go. Corrie found in her rehabilitation work, that only those who were able to forgive could make a good recovery and begin to live again. They could experience a life renewed, not only by being forgiven by the One who did no wrong, but also by forgiving the one who had done so much wrong to them. No one would have faulted Corrie for being filled with anger and bitterness at her captors, her persecutors, . . . and some might even go so far as to say . . . her God, but Corrie refused to live the life of a victim and instead chose to live life victoriously . . . free from bitterness . . . free from anger . . . freedom from revenge . . . simply free.

I have never in my life experienced something as terrible as what Corrie and many others had to endure. I cannot say that I have ever been called upon to forgive someone who has done such a great wickedness toward me. There have been times over the years, however, where injustices have occurred against me. I have been wronged, and I've found

it hard to forgive the person. Anyone alive has had at least one time in their life, and possibly plenty, when they were wronged. I won't give any names or particular instances as the names and dates are unimportant, but suffice it to say, I've found myself more than once in a heap on the floor crying out to God and claiming the verse, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." In those moments, though, what I have found more damaging than any injustice done to me, is my inability or unwillingness to forgive. I hate how unforgiveness feels. I hate that it keeps my mind engaged and wastes my time. I hate that in an instant it can make my heart feel pain and sadness all over again. I hate that it takes control and causes me to feel helpless and robs me of my joy. Bitterness comes from a place of unforgiveness, and it is only I who chooses to let it have any place in my life. Corrie once said, **"Forgiveness is the key which unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hatred. It breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness."**

## *Bible Study:* Freedom in Forgiveness

Forgiveness is foreign to man's nature, but it is the heart of God to forgive. Forgiveness is something every Christian struggles with and very few know how to deal with. Forgiveness is not a feeling that you passively wait for to come over you at some undetermined time when you all of a sudden have no more anger in your heart towards someone. Forgiveness, instead, is a choice you make to release yourself from anger, hatred, and resentment. I love that quote, "Forgiveness doesn't make the other person right, it makes you free."

### Three steps to experiencing the freedom of forgiveness:

1. **Perform surgery.** Just like a weed must be pulled out by the roots instead of just cutting down what shows on the surface, we must perform surgery on our hearts and minds. This is an inner response where you perform spiritual surgery in your memory, just like God did when He says in [Hebrews 8:12](#), "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Not only does God no longer remember our sins, He says He removes our sins from us. It says in [Psalm 103:12](#), "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Do you ever wonder why the Lord said from the east is from the west instead of from the north to the south? It would be the same difference, wouldn't it? No, it wouldn't. There is a point on the globe when you are going north that you can go no further and instead have to start going south, but there is no point on the globe when you are going west that you cannot still go further west. Interesting isn't it? This verse teaches us that God remembers our sin no more. There is no point at which He allows Himself to turn back and remember our sins. He does not continually bring our sins up to us. He does not allow our sins to change His loving nature toward us. With God's power and by meditating on His forgiveness, you can cut out of your mind all of the injustices committed against you. It doesn't happen naturally. It doesn't happen automatically. But . . . it can be done. For me what I have found works best is any time a thought comes to my mind about a past hurt or a wrong that has been done to me, I commit it to the Lord, tell myself I have already forgiven the person who has wronged me, and pray for them. When that fails and I find my mind once again dwelling on the injustice, I literally smack my hand and tell myself, "You will not think about that." Since I'm not into self-inflicting pain, this usually does the trick for me, although sometimes it takes a few smacks.

2. **Reconcile relationships.** Forgiveness is complete when alienated people are fully reconciled. I want to preface this with the fact that I am not advocating putting yourself in a dangerous situation where someone could cause you physical harm again, but I do believe that forgiveness in its truest form is shown when we are willing to be wronged again by someone who has wronged us before. Jesus shows us this example in [Matthew 5:39](#), "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." How many of us are guilty of saying, "I forgive you, but I'm not getting close to you again." Forgiveness means that you end the cycle of pain by restoring the relationship – whether or not the person every apologizes or tries to make things right on their end. The Bible gives us many examples of people who were good not only at forgiving but also at trying to restore the relationship. Joseph forgave his brothers who sold him into slavery and showed love to them. David forgave Saul who

tried to kill him numerous times without cause and showed him honor. And of course, Jesus was our greatest example who, when dying on the cross, said, ". . . [Father forgive them; for they know not what they do.](#) . . ." Besides the fact that God commands us to forgive many times in the Bible, He gives to us the greatest example of forgiveness and restoration of relationship when He forgives you and I every day, many times a day, and continues to seek a relationship with us. We, who are forgiven, not only have the capacity to forgive but the motivation to forgive as well.

3. **Let your Actions Speak.** Another common statement made by someone who has been wronged is "I forgive them, but I'm not showing them any kindness." We see later on in [Matthew 5:44](#), "[But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;](#)" All the verbs in this sentence. . . **love, bless, do good, pray** . . . they are all action verbs. They are not passive. They do not describe someone who has forgiven but wants nothing more to do with the person. Jesus wants us to be this kind of person - a person who has truly forgiven another - a person who isn't acting according to the natural man but is someone who is following their Heavenly Father's example. Show by your actions that you have completely forgiven. This is the **outward response** to your inner decision to be forgiving. Again, I'm not advocating that you put yourself in harms way, but it is important to have the mindset you are not going to allow an injustice done to you by someone else dictate to you your actions. You should be a loving, caring, forgiving person toward others, not because they are that way toward you, but because God is.