

Praise for

## **VICTORIOUS**

Corrie ten Boom  
and *The Hiding Place*

“The story of Corrie ten Boom is timeless, and I’m grateful that Stan Guthrie’s new book, *Victorious*, is reawakening a fascination with this remarkable woman’s witness. I was in my early 20s when I grew to know and love ‘Tante Corrie,’ and her tender, yet no-nonsense way of walking with her beloved Jesus helped shape my own life story. Her last words, spoken to me in her thick Dutch accent? ‘Joni, one day we shall dance together in heaven!’ And I’m still waiting for that dance. Turn the page and get to know this saint-of-the-age, as well as the history and details behind her amazing testimony. Her life may end up shaping your story, too!”

—**Joni Eareckson Tada**, Joni and Friends International Disability Center

“Corrie ten Boom’s faith and courage during World War II are on full display in her classic book, *The Hiding Place*, and in my own writings I’ve made no secret of my tremendous admiration for her. But Stan Guthrie’s book, *Victorious*, demonstrates Corrie’s continuing relevance for many current challenges, including refugees, anti-Semitism, and sharing the love of God in a skeptical age. Highly recommended.”

—**Eric Metaxas**, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of  
*Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*,  
*7 Women: And the Secret of Their Greatness*,  
and host of the nationally syndicated *Eric Metaxas Radio Show*

“I grew up on *The Hiding Place*. Not only did our family read it; we told and retold each other the harrowing stories from the book’s pages. In the process, Corrie ten Boom’s powerful, real-life account of faith and forgiveness in the face of unspeakable evil shaped my imagination. I am far from alone. The book has impacted millions, and now Guthrie, a skilled journalist and historian, is helping us understand why. With fascinating details about Corrie’s life, and insight into post-war evangelicalism, Guthrie paints a vivid picture of the wider world into which the book was born. *Victorious* will intrigue people who have never read *The Hiding Place*. And it will enable those of us who have read it, to encounter it again for the first time.”

—**Drew Dyck**, author of *Your Future Self Will Thank You: Secrets to Self-Control from the Bible and Brain Science*

“Stan Guthrie has brought one of our modern-day evangelical ‘saints’ to vivid life. He skillfully weaves ‘Tante Corrie’s’ riveting story of extraordinary bravery to the glory of God with our all-too-human story as contemporary followers of Jesus wrestling with profound ‘how should we then live?’ issues. On the way he brings in a snapshot of postwar America, Billy Graham, Hollywood, the scourge of anti-Semitism, and so much more. Highly recommended.”

—Elizabeth Cody Newenhuyse,

author of *God, I Know You’re Here Somewhere*

“Stan Guthrie paints a moving portrait of Christian Holocaust survivor and evangelist Corrie ten Boom, and details how her relationships with the likes of Brother Andrew and John and Elizabeth Sherrill led to one of the remarkable books of the 20th century. Guthrie also helps us apply Corrie’s life and ministry to the issues the church faces today: from evangelism, to anti-Semitism, to care for the elderly, immigration, and more. This book is a unique and compelling combination of biography, church history, and applied Christian worldview.”

—John Stonestreet,

President of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview,  
and host of *BreakPoint*

STAN GUTHRIE

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# VICTORIOUS

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Corrie ten Boom and *The Hiding Place*



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*Victorious: Corrie ten Boom and The Hiding Place*

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**For Benedict and Everild**

*May you find  
in Jesus the Victor  
your own hiding place.*



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# ONE

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## The Context

No book, and certainly not *The Hiding Place*, emerges ex nihilo, like Venus from the sea. Though the gospel it shares and the Savior it exalts are timeless, Corrie ten Boom's 1971 classic could not have sold millions of copies and helped shape the faith of a generation by itself. A number of specific people, events, and issues came together providentially to provide a bracing wind for this unforgettable volume's literary sails. Nearly half a century on, *The Hiding Place* still thrills and challenges us with its portrait of an imperfect servant of Jesus the Victor determined to defy evil, defend the weak, and endure hardship.



## CHAPTER 1

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# A DIZZYING ERA

*The Hiding Place* tells the story of several members of a close-knit, godly Christian family in Nazi-occupied Holland who choose to hide Jews, are betrayed by neighbors, and ultimately are sent to concentration camps, where several members of the family perish, and those who live are brought closer to Christ. Corrie, the first-person voice of this spiritual memoir, wrestles with issues such as renunciation of one's plans for God's, the ethics of lying to an evil regime to protect the innocent, how to forgive one's persecutors, how to discern the light of hope when all around is in shadows, and how to go on with life after calamity. The book ends within months of the war's close, with Corrie, already well into middle age, starting a ministry of reconciliation and healing first envisioned by her older, wiser (and now deceased) sister, Betsie.

The book's impact has been immense, its message timeless. Evangelical author Philip Yancey called *The Hiding Place* "a groundbreaking book that shines a clear light on one of the darkest moments of history." Jack W. Hayford, president of the International Foursquare Church, said it "is even more relevant to the present hour than at the time of its writing." Joyce Meyer, the well-known Bible teacher, said that *The Hiding Place* "is a classic that begs revisiting."<sup>1</sup> That is what we will do, God willing, in this volume.

The story told in *The Hiding Place* ends just before the start of a dizzying quarter-century of ministry for Corrie in scores of countries, and on the cusp of a still-challenging time for the world in which she worked. First were the early, painful years of rebuilding in Europe, along with the shock of discovery of the scale of Nazi atrocities. In the United States, the postwar boom commenced from a mobilized industrial base and pent-up consumer demand from people who had scrimped in the national effort to turn back tyranny. Corrie soon discovered that evangelicals in America largely were more open to her message of reconciliation and spiritual encouragement than were Christians in many parts of the Continent, where her story began.

America quickly assumed a hard-won central role on the global stage. Just as quickly, however, the nation was faced with the limits of its power. It was a time of increasing material prosperity and living standards, as well as new educational opportunities through the G.I. Bill. But it was also a time in which many Americans made an inward turn. A second world war had shocked them. Questions of theodicy and doubt—*How could a loving God allow such things to happen?*—arose in the hearts of the faithful. People wanted to get back to their dogged pursuit of happiness in what theological optimists still hoped was an “American Century,” forgetting about the horrors perpetrated in foreign lands.

However, the Cold War brought a new enemy, international communism, in the form of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and, soon thereafter, Red China. The Korean War followed quickly, ending in stalemate, and the world watched as the British Empire collapsed, ushering in unexpected forms of nationalism and popular unrest around the world. France’s eventual withdrawal from French Indochina would lead to another bloody impasse

and, eventually, to defeat for an America that had promised to “pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.”<sup>2</sup> Apparently, the price was simply too high for an America with myriad challenges at home. Corrie had known well the vagaries of international affairs and how quickly they can turn one’s comfortable home life upside down. It was a message for which many Americans were becoming increasingly ripe, though they did not yet know this.

The sixties in America began in optimism and ended, for many, in disillusionment. John F. Kennedy asked the citizens of an idealistic, confident nation to consider not what their country could do for them, but what they could do for their country. That kind of other-centered optimism was soon to dissipate. At first the country experienced another round of roaring economic growth, which in large part paid for the audacious Apollo program to put a man on the moon (while staving off a feared Soviet domination of outer space). Government ambitions were stratospheric in other ways, as well. The Johnson administration offered up the Great Society in an attempt to level the playing field for oppressed minorities and put an end to poverty.

The civil rights movement, too, sought to persuade a nation to live up to the ideals in its founding documents and dismantle Jim Crow, granting people of color the same civil rights as white people. It was powered by the soaring rhetoric of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who had a dream that all God’s children, of whatever race, would come together as brothers and sisters. King and others who stood up for racial equality, echoing Moses, to “let my people go,” often were met with arrest, jail, and water cannons, but eventually they prevailed. While Corrie would become famous primarily for her courage in hiding Jews and forgiving her

enemies, her personal biography of ministering to young people, those with disabilities, and people of many nationalities would provide a nonthreatening model for Americans grappling with reconciliation and cultural diversity issues.

The civil rights record for evangelicals, Christians who “take the Bible seriously and believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord,”<sup>3</sup> is tragically mixed on this score. Historian David Bebbington has offered a widely accepted four-part definition of evangelical characteristics.<sup>4</sup> They are conversionism (the belief that people must be transformed through belief in Christ and a lifetime of following him); activism (the gospel must be demonstrated through missionary work and social reform); biblicism (a high regard for the Bible and a desire to obey it as the final authority in life); and crucicentrism (a stress on the Cross of Christ as the basis of salvation). While Corrie, coming out of the Dutch Reformed Church, could not be classified as a card-carrying evangelical, these four points resonated with her and gave her an open door to speak into the hearts of the huge American evangelical audience. They were hearts that needed encouragement and challenge, and Corrie would provide both.

While each of these four points, as well as the long history of Christian social reform<sup>5</sup> and the example of Jesus himself, support a commitment to racial equality, too often evangelicals in this era looked the other way, like the priest and the Levite in the parable of the good Samaritan.<sup>6</sup> “Evangelicals resisted black equality in many ways,” Carolyn Renée Dupont, associate professor of history at Eastern Kentucky University, told Justin Taylor of the Gospel Coalition. “Some ministers preached an overt biblical sanction for segregation. Most preachers took a more oblique approach, remaining silent about black equality while condemning faith-based civil rights activism as ‘a prostitution of the church



*Corrie ten Boom discovered that evangelicals in America were more open to her message than were their counterparts in many parts of the Continent.*

for political purposes.’ Most southern Christians did not regard segregation as a sin, and they resented those who criticized their ‘way of life.’”<sup>7</sup>

A notable exception was Billy Graham, the international evangelist from North Carolina, who would become a strong friend and promoter of Corrie. Lon Allison, former executive director of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College, says in *Billy Graham: An Ordinary Man and His Extraordinary God* that early in Graham’s ministry, in 1952 in Jackson, Mississippi, or in 1953 in Chattanooga, Tennessee, the evangelist personally pulled down the ropes separating blacks and whites at his crusades.<sup>8</sup> From that point on, all would hear the gospel together, as equals before God and man.

Some have chided Graham for not doing more during the struggle for civil rights. Scholar Steven P. Miller calls him a “racial moderate” when compared with Martin Luther King Jr., and indeed Graham sought a heart change through the gospel as the ultimate answer to racism, not legislation.<sup>9</sup> Graham, however, explained that his emphasis on gospel preaching was supported by King, who shared the platform at Graham’s New York crusade in 1957.

“Early on,” Graham said, “Dr. King and I spoke about his method of using nonviolent demonstrations to bring an end to racial segregation. He urged me to keep on doing what I was doing—preaching the Gospel to integrated audiences and supporting his goals by example, and not to join him in the streets. ‘You stay in the stadiums, Billy,’ he said, because you will have far more impact on the white establishment there than you would if you marched in the streets. . . . But if a leader gets too far ahead of his people, they will lose sight of him and not follow him any longer.’ I followed his advice.”<sup>10</sup> Like Corrie, Graham emphasized the need for a change of heart through the Good News to overcome the sin of racism rather than a social or political program.



Civil rights was far from the only issue roiling the American landscape, and the comfortable cultural perch on which many evangelical believers sat. Among them were widespread campus radicalism, race riots, Vietnam, the drug and hippie cultures, several shocking political assassinations, and growing demands from feminists for equal rights. The America that had seemed so welcoming in previous decades suddenly seemed alien to many people. Corrie, whose native country had been overwhelmed by the Nazi invasion, could relate.

In the comparative historical blip between victory in the Second World War and the unraveling in Vietnam, old verities were being challenged, sometimes violently, as new, sometimes alien, values came to the fore. During the “Me Decade” of the seventies, Watergate, inflation, the war, “no-fault” divorce, and other troubles sapped people’s willingness to trust, and to reach out. Many were simply hoping for a breather. Evangelicals were concerned with the spiritual and social upheaval they were seeing in America.

They were far from alone. The decade brought many challenges. Crime rates were rising. The brutal, unhinged Manson family shocked the nation. The year 1971 was filled with challenges and controversies—the continuing Cold War, the Pentagon Papers, racial unrest and rioting, the Attica prison riot, the Weather Underground, and the controversial Equal Rights Amendment approved by the US House.

The early seventies would be full of disorienting and unwelcome challenges for evangelicals and the heretofore self-confident country in which they lived. Inflation, fueled by federal monetary policies and other factors, more than doubled to 8.8 percent. In a few years, it would hit 12 percent. By 1980, the inflation rate was 14 percent.<sup>11</sup> American Christians unknowingly

were being prepared to receive Corrie's message of faithfulness amid times of national distress.

The international scene also was unsettled. The Arab oil embargo, sparked in October 1973 by the Nixon administration's support of Israel in the Yom Kippur War, drove the price of a barrel of oil from \$2.90 to \$11.65,<sup>12</sup> raising the price at the pump for a gallon of gasoline from 38.5 cents to 55.1 cents. Facing oil shortages, many states asked citizens not to put up Christmas lights. Oregon banned them.<sup>13</sup> Other shocks were not long in coming: Watergate, the painful loss of South Vietnam to the communists, the decline of traditional American manufacturing power and the automakers, and American foreign policy and prestige foundering under the "born again" president, Jimmy Carter.

The Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion across all fifty states was still two years away. President Richard Nixon, seeking to justify his policies, had claimed the support of a "silent majority," and evangelicals were a big part of his coalition, and that of George Wallace in Alabama. While the Religious Right and Moral Majority were not yet formed, evangelicals were beginning to organize politically at the local level. Corrie's story, however, demonstrated the limits of political solutions in the face of evil. Though she was bold enough to confront it or resist it, Corrie's goal was always to advance the kingdom of Jesus the Victor, not any earthly kingdom. It was an approach that would resonate with American Christians struggling with big challenges.

Television was also changing, transitioning rapidly from a medium whose primary aim was entertainment of the masses to sell advertising to one in which social change was preached in subtle, and not so subtle, ways. While there was still plenty of fluff to go around (*Happy Days*, *Welcome Back, Kotter*, and *Charlie's Angels*, for example), increasing numbers of programs were

developing a harder social edge, broaching topics that had once been confined to the campus, the dinner table, or the bedroom.

Concerning depictions of the Second World War in film and television, 1961's engrossing *Judgment at Nuremberg* depicted the trial of four German judges for cooperating with the Nazis and committing crimes against humanity. The film won numerous awards and is notable for its groundbreaking use of grisly Allied film of slaughtered concentration-camp victims. Among the many other movies depicting the conflict were *Sink the Bismarck!* (1960), *The Guns of Navarone* (1961), and *Battle of the Bulge* (1965).

In America, acknowledgment of the Holocaust, which had left six million Jews dead, was not high on the agenda. In 1945, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander, had visited a concentration camp in the ancient German city of Gotha. Eisenhower wanted to collect evidence of the German slaughter of Jews while it was still fresh, to preclude people from denying the enormity of what the Germans had perpetrated. "I visited every nook and cranny of the camp," Eisenhower said, "because I felt it my duty to be in a position from then on to testify at first hand about these things in case there ever grew up at home the belief or assumption that 'the stories of Nazi brutality were just propaganda.'" <sup>14</sup>

The tendency to pass over the horror of the Holocaust and get on with life was strong in 1960s America. Even worse, anti-Semitism was little discussed but very much alive. According to the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, in 1964, a disturbing 29 percent of American adults held anti-Semitic views. <sup>15</sup>

*Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* was first published in 1952. The book was a sensation in personalizing the persecution and murder of Jews by the Nazis. Through the pen of young Anne

in her diary, it describes how a Jewish family hid in some secret rooms in an Amsterdam office building. The book spotlights the developing and sometimes difficult relationships of ordinary people trying to live ordinary lives in desperate circumstances. Their betrayal and capture are not presented, except briefly in an epilogue. The horrifying *Night* (English edition, 1960), by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, also roused some in America from their complacency.

But not all. The farcical television comedy *Hogan's Heroes* (1965–1971) was ending its long run on CBS. The series portrayed an international group of Allied prisoners running special operations out of a German POW camp, Stalag 13. Four of the major German characters were actually portrayed by Jewish actors, and three of them, and one other supporting actor, were Jews who had escaped from the Nazis during World War II. While the Nazis on *Hogan's Heroes* were usually presented as inept or evil (or both), there was no grappling with the extent of horror perpetrated by the Third Reich, and the word “Jew” was never mentioned. Corrie’s story would challenge such complacency by showing Christian boldness in the face of explicit Nazi evil.

In terms of religious affiliation, the postwar era was seeing a gradual but noticeable decline in the number of Americans claiming to be Protestant or other non-Catholic adherents of Christianity.<sup>16</sup> From a high above 70 percent in the mid- to late 1950s, their share had slipped to 61 percent by 1973, owing to a more welcoming attitude toward Roman Catholics in the nation’s mainstream and to a change in federal immigration policy that brought in fewer immigrants from Europe and more from Asia and Latin America.<sup>17</sup>

In this time of social upheaval, cultural diversity, and declining influence, Protestant evangelicals were ripe for reassurance about

old truths. They were also looking for new heroes, and the explosion onto the national scene of one James Earl Carter was still years away.<sup>18</sup> But two such heroes, from the Netherlands of all places, were already working among them.