

Once in a Lifetime: A Visit to 'The Hiding Place'

"Look a watch shop," I said, pointing to the *Ten Boom Watch and Jewelry* sign written on a storefront window displaying clocks, watches, and jewelry. We were here!

Since we were vacationing in the Netherlands, our family decided to visit the Hiding Place Museum.

The museum symbolized three generations of watchmaking, but more importantly, three generations who loved Jesus Christ with all their hearts. In 1844, a Messianic Jewish pastor approached Corrie ten Boom's grandfather, Willem, and asked Willem to start a weekly prayer meeting for the Jewish people. It seemed odd because at that time, the nation of Israel did not exist and the Jews were scattered throughout the world. Willem began weekly prayer meetings for the Jewish people that continued for 100 years.

Ushered into a charming living room, I felt like we had stepped back in time to the early 20th century. Unlike other museums, we were able to sit down on the ten Boom furniture and listen to our guide.

He told us that Corrie's father, Casper and his wife, Cor, moved to Amsterdam to start a family, making friends with many Jewish folks. Casper shared passages of the Old Testament like Isaiah 53, with them. When Grandfather Willem died, the family moved back to the little house above the watch shop in Haarlem.

Corrie and her sister, Betsy, did not marry like the other two children, but Corrie shared the gospel with young people through sewing and scouting clubs. She led many girls to Christ.

"There was always laughter and music in this home," our guide said. "Does anyone play the piano?"

A Christian brother from the Czech Republic sat down and filled the parlor with beautiful music. We sang hymns together, some in other languages.

When World War II began, the entire ten Boom clan joined the resistance. Jewish men and women took refuge in the tiny home above the watch shop until a place opened up for them out in the country where it was safer. "When Casper was warned that the danger of hiding Jews from the Nazis would be imprisonment and death, he declared that it would be a privilege to give his life to save God's chosen people. After all, His Master was Jewish."

"When danger arose, the guests had to escape quickly to the hiding place," the guide said. "They worked hard to get the drill down to 70 seconds. They also had to get rid of any evidence of their presence such as a teacup or extra hand of cards. Would you like to see the hiding place?"

We all nodded. I was so excited! I had read the book *The Hiding Place* and seen the movie. I followed the rest of the large group up the narrow, winding staircase. The hiding place was in Corrie's bedroom.

"They hired a contractor. He built the wall very thick and below the floor so the Nazis wouldn't find it," the guide told us. I looked at the large opening, noticing the thickness of the walls. "Here is the secret entrance." He paused dramatically and walked over to the linen closet, opening up the closet to reveal shelves of blankets, sheets and towels. He lifted a pile of blankets on the bottom shelf and pushed open a secret door into the hiding place.

There were smiles, but every eye was moist.

"The night of the final raid came on an evening when Corrie

was very sick. Betsy answered the door,” our guide took up again. “Though suspicious of the Dutch traitor outside, Betsy and Corrie gave him help anyway.

“He brought back the Gestapo, who arrested all three ten Booms: Casper, Betsy and Corrie. But the little hiding place worked! The soldiers chopped, hacked and destroyed, but the five people inside the tiny cramped place stayed hidden for two days until members of the Dutch Resistance could get them to safety.

“One Jewish lady who was hidden in Corrie’s hiding place was arrested at her next place of refuge and taken to a concentration camp. For 24 hours she was alone in a cell with a woman who had found Christ in one of Corrie’s girls’ clubs. She led the Jewish lady to the Lord, only one day before her death.

“Corrie was the only one who survived the concentration camp, discharged due to an administrative error. Making a conscious effort to forgive, she spent the rest of her life sharing her testimony and extending forgiveness to her captors.”

We were on the roof now looking over the city of Haarlem. I wondered to myself if I could forgive someone who killed my family. As we ended the tour and I looked around at the donation box (the museum was free) and the books for sale, I felt tears again. One family had stood together with Jesus and made a difference. I want my family to stand together with Jesus and change the world for His glory.

I have always been inspired by Corrie ten Boom’s life through her books and the movie *The Hiding Place*, but to actually see her home, to see the tiny “hiding place” where people hid to avoid torture and death—Wow! If you find yourself in Germany, Belgium, France or the Netherlands, please consider visiting the Corrie ten Boom Museum. It is easily accessible by train. It’s worth the trip!

Meredith Curtis, pastor's wife and homeschooling mom of five amazing children, has been married to her college sweetheart, Mike Curtis for 31 years. She loves Jesus, leads worship, homeschools, writes, mentors ladies and sometimes even cooks dinner! She is the author of Joyful and Successful Homeschooling, and several high school classes and Bible studies. She and Mike are founders of the Finish Well Conference, a Christian conference aimed at equipping families to disciple their children to be world changers.