

## **Moral Courage Does Not Hide**

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11-12<sup>th</sup> Grade Category, Second Place**

*"The measure of a life, after all, is not its duration, but its donation."*

-Corrie ten Boom (More Quotes by Corrie ten Boom)

This statement accurately describes the views of countless individuals living during World War II and the Holocaust. They saw their lives as tools to be used in aiding those less fortunate than themselves. Many gave everything they had in order to save as many people as they could from the horrors of the time. One such family was the ten Booms of Haarlem, Holland.

A prominent family in the community, the ten Booms lived their lives for their faith and for the good of others. During the second World War, they offered up their home and their safety to assist those in dire need; those hunted by the Nazis. Their house became an outpost for the Dutch underground resistance movement and a safe haven for those who needed to be hidden. Using a secret room in the upstairs of their house, the ten Booms provided a hiding spot for an odd assortment of Jews and resistance members in case they were to be discovered by the Nazis (ten Boom). Even though they were Catholic, the ten Booms assisted the Jewish community because it was the right thing to do.

On February 28, 1944, the ten Booms were betrayed, and the house was raided. The Nazis arrested around thirty people in all, but they were not able to find the Jews. The hiding space was put to the test, and it passed with flying colors. Jammed full with six individuals, the room stayed hidden even through intense Nazi searches. After 47 hours and possessing only a small amount of food and no water, those in hiding were rescued by members of the Dutch underground resistance movement and moved to new hiding locations (ten Boom).

While those individuals were extremely blessed and not taken into custody by the Nazis, the ten Boom family was not as lucky. The father, son, and two daughters were arrested because the police discovered extra ration cards and information regarding the underground movement in their house. The ten Booms were moved from prison to prison over the following months. One daughter, Corrie, survived the death camps and the war. The rest of her family perished in the camps or shortly after being liberated (ten Boom).

All the members of the ten Boom family displayed strong moral courage. They stood up for what they believed in even when their lives were in jeopardy. They took care of those less fortunate than themselves because doing the right thing was part of who they were. They obtained no benefit from it. In 1971, Corrie ten Boom went on to write a book with the help of John and Elizabeth Sherrill called *The*

*Hiding Place*. Over two million copies of this book have been printed, and the miraculous story of the ten Booms has been read worldwide.

When I was younger, I read this book because I was interested in the Holocaust and the diagram of the ten Boom house on the back cover intrigued me. I could not imagine how so many people were able to stay hidden inside such a small space. What I did not realize was how much I would take away from this story. I was inspired by the family's courage and their ability to do what was right in the face of such a great threat. I also admired their faith when their family was falling apart in the Nazi death camps. I have never been in any real danger nor have I ever been faced with the choice of saving myself or saving another. However, I have come to realize that when one is graced with the gift of moral courage such as the ten Boom family, doing the right thing is no longer a choice. It is an impulse. People do the right thing because they have to, because doing the right thing is part of them.

Growing up I was always bothered by the concept of anyone being bullied. It didn't matter how small or large the act; it just plain bothered me. I was always the one to stand up for everyone, to invite everyone. I never wanted anyone to be left out or excluded in any way. I never wanted anyone to be hurt by the actions of another so I would do everything in my power to prevent that from happening. That quality has stayed with me my entire life.

Moral courage, therefore, once embedded in individuals cannot be removed. It becomes a part of them. It becomes their life. They measure their life by what they are able to do for others, by the good they are able to spread. Life is not about what you get out of it, but rather, what you put into it. Moral courage is the ability to brave danger for the good of others despite the possible harm that could be inflicted upon one's self.

#### Work Cited

"More Quotes by Corrie ten Boom." Answers.com. 2008. Answers Corporation. 20 Jan 2009 <<http://www.answers.com/topic/quote-4?author=Boom,%20Corrie%20Ten&s2=Corrie%20Ten%20Boom>>.  
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