

OPEN DOORS

Secret Church Talk Outline

A simple talk outline
for use after your
Secret Church event



***ASK:** How did you find that experience? What did it feel like?
Did you hear anything from God through the activities?*

AROUND THE WORLD MILLIONS OF CHRISTIANS HAVE TO KEEP THEIR FAITH HIDDEN...

- For us, Secret Church is an interesting, unusual, even exciting event. It may be different, but it's not dangerous. It's not illegal. We didn't have to worry about being followed, having our names taken, or being arrested for gathering in this way.
- But the reality is that for many people this is exactly how they have to meet for church.
- Secret Christians don't want to worship in this way. Their dearest wish is to be allowed to worship freely. But they can't.

EXAMPLES: SECRET CHURCH AROUND THE WORLD

In places where Christianity is forbidden, most Christians meet secretly in homes. In countries like Somalia or Bhutan, Christians arrive quietly and carefully, one at a time, so as not to draw attention to themselves. And the location might change from week to week.

They can find themselves meeting in the most extraordinary places. In a North Korean prison camp, a Christian lady called Hea Woo used to hold ultra-secret church meetings in the toilets. She described her 'toilet church': "I taught them Bible verses and some songs, which we sang almost inaudibly."

YET, THE CHURCH IS GROWING!

- The amazing thing is that the church is growing in these places.
- Slowly, but steadily, people are coming to faith.

STORY: SECRET CHURCH IN CENTRAL ASIA

In one Central Asian country, there's a man called Alisher. It's not his real name. Alisher is pastor of a secret church. In his country, only one in ten of the population has access to a Bible and religious literature is banned.

For five years now, Alisher has made a journey every month. After receiving books from an Open Doors coordinator, he secretly delivers books to underground churches in different parts of the country.

"Alisher is a very important person for us," says the pastor of an underground church. "Without the literature that Alisher brings to us, it would be extremely difficult to lead the church."

He takes Bibles, Christian study guides, children's Bibles, whatever they need. And this is what he says:

"We need to make a difference. Delivering Bibles and literature is risky, but I intend to continue in this work. Faith comes by hearing."

- Secret believers need things that we take for granted. They need to meet together to worship and pray, they need teaching and they need to study the Bible.
- They need leaders: Alisher is just one of many secret pastors, looking after small groups of hidden Christians in places where the church is driven underground.

THIS IS WHY THE WORK OF OPEN DOORS IS SO IMPORTANT.

- Sixty years ago, a man called Andrew dared to travel behind the Iron Curtain, to seek out the secret believers in the Communist world.
- He found a church which thought that the world had forgotten them. He started to smuggle Bibles across the borders, packing them into his little VW Beetle.
- Over time he was joined by others. He founded an organisation called Open Doors and the work spread beyond Communist Europe into China, Africa, the Middle East...
- Today, Open Doors supports persecuted Christians in more than 50 countries around the world.
- Many of these believers are secret Christians, in underground churches.
- Open Doors supports these secret Christians with Bibles. It trains and equips pastors. It sends people to visit these churches, to spend time with them, to show them that they are not forgotten or alone. And it supports believers who are imprisoned for their faith.

SO WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM PEOPLE LIKE THAT?

***ASK:** What do you think we can learn from them?*

- These people are prepared to risk everything to follow Jesus and to meet together.
- It may cost them everything. Yet they are still prepared to say 'Yes' to Jesus.
- Jesus said that those who would be his disciples must be prepared to pay the price.

***READ:** Mark 8:34–35 "Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.'"*

***ASK:** Are we as committed in following Jesus?*

***ENCOURAGE** people to recommit themselves to being disciples of Jesus.*

- Persecuted Christians understand that as disciples, we need the strength and support of others. Meeting together as Christians is important

***READ:** Hebrews 10:23–25 "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

- So we must not take our freedom to worship freely for granted.

***ASK:** What can we do to celebrate this freedom?*

***ENCOURAGE** people to do something publicly to express their faith.*

OUR PERSECUTED FAMILY NEEDS OUR PRAYERS AND OUR SUPPORT.

- The Bible tells us to identify with those who are mistreated.

READ: *Hebrews 13:3*

“Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.”

READ: *1 Corinthians 12:26–27*

“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

- They are asking us to pray for them.
- They need our practical support.

ASK: *What can we do to help them?*

ENCOURAGE people to support the persecuted church by filling in a response card. They will be able to get a free copy of *God’s Smuggler*, the best-selling book Brother Andrew wrote about his journeys. In return Open Doors are asking that people join us on the adventure of supporting the persecuted church around the world.

END WITH THIS PRAYER

partly based on a prayer from a Christian in hiding in Pakistan.

He says: “These are hard times. We cannot carry on without your prayers.”

Lord Jesus,

We pray for your followers around the world.

For those who are known to be Christian, and whose lives are in danger,

For those who have to keep their faith hidden, and who fear being discovered,

For those who are grieving, and who have nowhere else to turn,

For those who have been arrested, and who long to be with their family and friends again.

We pray that they will know the Lord’s comfort; that He will care for them as the shepherd holds His sheep.

We pray that their faith will not falter and that they will not be at the mercy of those who are looking for them.

We pray that we will stand with them: our family, our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Thank you for our freedom to worship you; help us to remember those around the world who do not have the same freedom.

In your name, we pray,

Amen