

OPEN DOORS

Secret Screening Talk Outline

A simple talk outline
for use at your Secret
Screening event



*This talk is best for after there has been
a 'Secret Screening' of The Cost.*

WHAT DOES IT COST YOU TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

- Financially, there's the cost of petrol, or a bus ticket to church. Sometimes we pay to go to Christian events. There's always that new pair of funky sandals or a shiny new Bible.
- We give money, as well, to support the work. And maybe support other charities.
- But what about other kinds of cost? Maybe the effort of getting out of bed on a Sunday morning. Maybe the cost of being identified as a Christian. Perhaps people think we're a bit odd.
- Generally, though, it's not a dangerous or unusual activity. It's not illegal. We won't get arrested if we carry our Bibles in public.
- The fact is that being a Christian in our culture doesn't cost us very much at all. Even so, we often baulk at paying that small price. How many times do we have the opportunity to say we're a Christian or share something about Jesus with others, but don't say anything?
- We're afraid of being different, of what people might think of us, of the damage to our reputation, credibility, popularity, status or pride. Our friends or peers just might turn round and say, "What? You actually believe in God?"

FOR MILLIONS OF CHRISTIANS, FOLLOWING JESUS CARRIES A GREATER COST.

- Take some of those people we have just seen in the film. Look at the cost of being a Christian in Syria today. Think about those words of Pastor Edward:
"We know that many countries withdrew their ambassadors, which is bad enough. But if heaven withdrew its ambassador from the country, it's a disaster. Our privilege is not that we are able to leave, our privilege is that we are able to stay..."
- A *privilege*. A privilege to stay in a war zone? To go to bed every night not sure whether they will wake up? And why? Because they see themselves as heaven's ambassadors.
- An ambassador always speaks up on behalf of his or her country. An ambassador always wants to promote the interests of their country. An ambassador is not embarrassed or ashamed of their nationality.

A BIT OF HISTORY...

- The church in Syria is an ancient church - the first recorded church outside Roman Palestine (Acts 11).
- When Saul was converted, he was on the way to persecute Christians in Damascus. So from the start they've known the cost of following Jesus.



- **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.

- A little while before Saul went to Damascus, a while before he became Paul, the great Christian apostle, he was present at the stoning of a man called Stephen.
- Stephen dared to speak the truth to those in power, to say to them that God was much bigger than they had ever imagined.
- Stephen was a follower of Jesus of Nazareth. And he paid for that with his life. He was willing to be Jesus’ witness whatever the cost.
- “Ah yes,” you say, “but that’s in the Bible. They were superheroes.”
- They were men and women of deep faith, but at the time they were just obeying Jesus.
- The same is true today. All around the world, ordinary Christians are finding the strength to stand up for what they believe in the face of enormous pressure. Ordinary Christians who are prepared to pay the cost.

AND WHAT ABOUT US...?

- When we feel embarrassed, uncertain, lacking in confidence, afraid and inadequate – that’s exactly what the early church felt.
- It’s exactly what Brother Andrew felt all those years ago on the train to Warsaw. He didn’t know he was founding a movement. He didn’t know he was going to spend the rest of his life supporting the persecuted church. He was just a man with a suitcase, going where he felt Jesus wanted him to go.
- He was prepared to speak out. Christians in Syria are having a massive impact on the society around them because they are living out the gospel and telling others.

PRAYING FOR BOLDNESS...

- Stephen’s death was not the first trouble the church in Jerusalem had had with the authorities. A little while earlier, Peter and John had been locked up. When they were released, they knew that more trouble was coming. This is what they prayed:
- Have you ever prayed like that? Have you ever prayed for courage and boldness and for God to work through you?

CASE STUDY: PASTOR IN LEBANON

The war in Syria and the turmoil in Iraq have created millions of refugees.

There’s a pastor in Lebanon who, every day, prays the prayer of Peter and John – for courage and boldness to keep loving, serving those in need, despite the personal threats to him and his family. He runs a ministry reaching out to Syrian refugees and they are seeing many Muslims come to know Jesus.

Many of these refugees say, “We’ve lost our homes, our family, everything. But we’ve found Jesus.”

He lives with the reality that Islamic State fighters are less than an hour away. Yet he prays for courage and boldness to be able to step out to bring change, hope and transformation.

SO WHAT DO WE TAKE FROM THIS?

- Are we prepared to pay the cost? There is a cost to following Jesus. Jesus promised that all those who followed him would receive abundant life (John 10:10), but there is also a cost to be paid. This is what Brother Andrew says in the film:
"If you want an easy Christian life, I advise you not to get involved in the suffering church. Not that you lose the fun, but there is a price to be paid: 'Unless you take up your cross and follow me, deny yourself and follow me,' Jesus says, 'you cannot be my disciple.'"
- Are we prepared to pay that price in our communities, here and now?
- Are we prepared to stand with those who carry their crosses right now? Are we prepared to stand with all those who face the consequences of following Jesus: who lose their jobs or their education, who are rejected by their families or communities, who are beaten, imprisoned?
- 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."*

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 is 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