



1. INTRO

60 years ago, in 1955, a young Dutch chap called Andrew headed off to Poland to crash a communist youth festival.

During the trip God moved powerfully and from that point on Andrew risked it all to follow God's lead, serving the persecuted church; believing that all doors are open to the gospel. That all happened because Brother Andrew had the courage to say yes to God.

Sixty years on Open Doors continues to stand alongside followers of Jesus who live out their faith courageously in the most hostile places on earth.

Tonight we'd like to show you a film made by Open Doors. It's called 'The Cost'. And as well as telling a bit of the Open Doors story, the film will also introduce you to some amazing Christians in Syria who are risking everything to follow Jesus. Every day, they make the choice to follow Jesus whatever the cost.

This is their story. And tonight you can share in it.

2. SHOW - THE COST

3. REFLECTION

How can we respond to that? How can we be more like Brother Andrew and those Syrian Christians we've just met? How can we be sold out for Jesus?

Following Jesus can be summed up in a word – YES. As God nudges us over the situations we see in our world we need to have open ears and open hearts.

We also need to have the courage to say 'Yes' when he asks. And courage isn't always easy. Often we can bottle it, especially where Jesus is concerned.

We're afraid of what following Jesus might cost us. Our reputation, credibility, popularity, status, our pride are at stake. In social situations, in a work context we keep Jesus at arms-length. It's safer. It's less embarrassing that way. So we opt for a version of Christianity that's safe; comfortable Christianity. We choose a Sunday Jesus or summer festival Jesus. But it's not a version that's going to change the world.

For the early church and persecuted Christians today they face possible death for following Jesus. Meanwhile we're terrified of social death! We live with the fear that our peers just might turn round and say 'What you actually believe in God?' We carry a sense of shame and embarrassment.

- We need to be OK with being laughed at. After all we don't mind banter about what football teams we support... and some of them are pretty average...
- We need to be OK about not fitting in.
- We need to be those who change culture and not conform to it. To have the courage and boldness to stand out, to step out and take some risks – that's what we've seen is key to the lives of those people in the film.

A while back I heard the story of a lady called Helen from Eritrea, east Africa, where Christians are regarded as enemies of the state. How crazy is that?! Helen spent two and a half years locked inside a metal shipping container because she refused to deny her faith in Jesus. She was imprisoned with around 2000 other Christians. Every day she woke up on a cold jagged metal floor, and as the sun rose the container would reach intensely hot temperatures.

Helen was a worship leader and Gospel singer... She would sing worship songs in the darkness of the container to keep her sane, but also to let everyone know that following Jesus was everything. There was no room to be apathetic or lukewarm. Helen said this 'If I could sing in prison imagine what you can do for God's glory with your freedom?'

Sobering, challenging thought. So, what about us? Will we commit and follow God with all we are? Let's not settle for a comfortable version of Christianity. Will we be willing to count the cost?

4. PRAY

Walk through the prayer PowerPoint. Spend a few minutes doing it, but make sure people don't lose interest. You could write your own prayers and get various people to read them out or invite people to pray out the points on the various slides.

5. ACT NOW

There are many things you can do as a response to what you've seen and heard tonight. These are two you can do now.

Text: Send a gift via text. If you've been moved by the stories and situations you've see just Text 'ODSS15 £4' to 70070 to give £4 to Open Doors. Open Doors is currently supporting 45,000 people in Iraq and Syria and £4 can provide someone who has lost everything a week of essential supplies.

Sign up: Fill in your details on the form at the back to connect further with Open Doors and get some of their awesome free resources.

Thanks for coming this evening, please keep praying about what you've seen on the film and tell others about the situation facing Christians in Syria.