

**YOU WILL NEED**

- Some time - about 20 mins.
- A quiet spot
- Something to watch a video clip on from YouTube on
- A Bible
- A coin
- A pen and some paper

All of us are facing unique, new and strange times. With schools and colleges closed, coffee shops and businesses shut and churches not meeting, life is almost on hold. It's a really uncertain period. We don't know how long this will last or who will be affected. But, for the next 15 minutes, we want to help you face up to this uncertainty and accept it, knowing that God is the same, yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). We want to learn from people who have been in this situation before, from people who know what it is to be confined, imprisoned, and restricted. There are many Christians all over the world who are persecuted for their faith, whilst being in lock down is new for us, for them it's normal.

So, find a good chair, grab a drink, your Bible, a pen, some paper and get ready to hear some amazing stories that will challenge and encourage you to lean into Him, the unchanging one, during this time of uncertainty.

**PRAY**

Just pause. Sit. Slow down your breathing. Focus on God. Ask him to speak to you whilst you go through this devotional. And know that we, and others around the UK, are praying this with you!

*Father God. You are good. You are unchanging. Please speak to me as I read these stories. Help me put aside distractions and focus on You. Teach me something new. Let me know You are with me. Amen.*

**WARM UP: ACTIVITY**

Find a coin. Toss it as you ask yourself the following questions. If it lands on heads, the answer is yes, tails, no.

- Will I video call someone today?
- Will I cook for people I live with today?
- Will I tidy my room or help clean the house?

What were your answers? Will you do them today (your choice, no pressure!). Not knowing what will happen - facing uncertainty - can leave us feeling really vulnerable. At the moment, things are really uncertain - we're not in control of big decisions being made about our lives - but that doesn't mean we should panic. We can choose to be rooted in Jesus, and trust that He has a plan for us and our world, even in the midst of darkness.

**VIDEO**

Check out the video by Naomi as she reflects on Zafar's\* story. Being from Central Asia, in choosing Jesus, he was choosing an uncertain future.

- **What do you feel uncertain or worried about at the moment?**
- Zafar chose to follow Jesus, even though he knew it meant not knowing how his family would react. **What is it about saying yes to Jesus that makes the uncertainty worth it?**

**STORY: BROTHER ANDREW - SAY YES**

If you didn't know, Open Doors (that's us who've written this reflection), works around the world to stand alongside and support Christians facing pressure like Zafar. Brother Andrew, the guy who started Open Doors over 60 years ago, did so almost accidentally. He knew Christians at that time were facing restrictions and pressure. In the Soviet Union, Bibles were becoming hard to come by and churches were being forced to close. Some Christian leaders were being threatened by the police. But Brother Andrew didn't start with a big plan:

*"I never wanted to start a ministry. I simply went on one trip to Poland in 1955... Shortly after that I had the opportunity to go to Czechoslovakia. I found the church in both countries, discovered their need, and started bringing Bibles. There was no plan, no vision, certainly no thought about leading a worldwide organisation. God revealed a need I could meet and I did what I could."*

Continued...

Brother Andrew on an early Bible smuggling trip in to Eastern Europe, the late 1950s when Christianity was being severely restricted by the Soviet Union. . He used an old VW Beetle and hid Bibles in the boot.



Brother Andrew's life story is amazing (want to know more, get a copy of his book, [God's Smuggler!](#)), but it was just one key moment that changed his life forever – it was a moment when he chose to say 'Yes' to God. He was working in a factory, but had felt God call him to a life of mission. He felt very uncertain about what this would mean for his future and how he would afford to study, live and pay bills (if you're a student, you'll know the feeling). If he said 'Yes' to God, a lot was going to change. Everything was about to be thrown into the air – sound familiar?

Things may be feeling uncertain right now. But one of the first things we can do, like Zafar and Brother Andrew, is say 'Yes' to God. But it's not always that easy. Brother Andrew was wrestling with himself. He prayed:

*'What is it, Lord? What am I holding back? What am I using as an excuse for not serving You in whatever You want me to do?'*

In response, God showed Brother Andrew that he was hesitating. Instead of just saying 'Yes', Brother Andrew would always say 'Yes, but' to God. 'But' – one, tiny, but significant word.

Recognise that in yourself? Maybe with you it's 'Yes, but after COVID-19 is over'. Or, 'Yes, but when I've got my A-Levels or degree'. Or, 'Yes, but when I'm older'. In the end, Brother Andrew chose to change his 'Yes, but' into a life of obedience and trust in God:

*"Whenever, wherever, however you want me, I'll go... I'll begin this very minute. Lord as I stand up from this place, and as I take my first step forward, will you consider this a step towards complete obedience to you? I'll call it the step of yes".*

- Are there areas in your life where you are saying "Yes, but"?

Could you say 'Yes' to God's plan for you, today? That same 'Yes' led Brother Andrew on a path of uncertainty, but also adventure. That 'Yes'

bought Zafar an unknown future, but it also showed him the love of the Father that he had longed for.

### BIBLE: GENESIS 37-50

The story of Joseph is amazing in many ways. His life was full of uncertainty, from being kicked out by his family (like Zafar) to facing time in prison to then being put in charge of the whole of Egypt. But, no matter how dark things got and how uncertain things appeared, Joseph kept saying 'Yes' to God.

### There's a lot to learn in his story. Start by reading Genesis chapter 37 and then think about these questions.

- What was Joseph's attitude like? He had dreams about his future. Do you think he was pretty sure of where his life was heading?
- How do you think he felt being taken from his family? His future was unravelling in-front of him. Do you know what that feels like?
- Everything was being stripped from Joseph, his coat, his dreams, his home and even his relationships with his family. All the things he found security in were disappearing. Think about the end of the story - if Joseph hadn't lost all those things, would he still have trusted in God and come to be in charge of all Egypt? Maybe not.
- Are there things in your life that God might need to strip away so you can become more secure and reliant on Him? Think about school grades, sports competitions, your social circles, or future plans - with these things being taken away during the lock-down - can you choose to rely and trust more on God?
- Finally, God was speaking to Joseph through his dreams. During the lockdown, you might be sleeping a bit more, but, has God ever spoken to you through your dreams? If not, why not ask him to?

If you have time, commit to reading the rest of Joseph's story over the next week.

### ACTIVITY

When you say 'Yes' to God, you are saying that you trust Him. In this storm of uncertainty, change and worry, trusting in the unchanging, always loving God is a vital anchor for us.

- Can you think of any other people in the Bible who said 'Yes' to God? (If you're stuck, look up Isaiah 6:1-8 for one. Can you find others? Think about Jesus calling the first disciples, Abraham or Zacchaeus and look them up)

Grab a piece of paper and write down on one side the things that are making you feel uncertain. Then turn the paper over and write 'Yes' along with the verses you found of people saying 'Yes' to God in the Bible. Deuteronomy 6: 4-9 encourages us to write Scripture on door-posts to help remind us of God's promises. Stick the piece of paper to the door frame of your room so when you go out into another day of uncertainty, you're reminded to trust and say 'Yes' to God.

### PRAY

*Father God, thank You for our brothers and sisters in Christ all around the world. Thank you for Zafar and many others like him who are willing to take a step of 'Yes' - a step of faith towards you - despite the uncertain journey it may take him on. Thank You that You have a plan for me. Help me trust. Help me keep my heart and mind on You. Let my 'Yes' really mean "Yes". Amen.*