



CHOOSE TO
LOSE

CHALLENGE

Stories, thoughts and prayers to help
you connect with persecuted Christians
during your Choose to Lose Challenge

Open Doors
YOUTH



THE CHOOSE TO LOSE CHALLENGE EXPLAINED:

Get sponsored to give up something you love for a short time to raise money and prayer for young Christians around the world who, in choosing Jesus, have lost nearly everything.

You choose what to give up, for how long and when. That's it!

Image: Sele, from Nigeria, is 13. When he was young, he lost his dad – he was killed because of his faith in Jesus. By choosing to lose, you could help young Christians like Sele who have lost out. Raising **£60** through the challenge could provide school fees for a young Nigerian, like Sele, whose father has been killed for his Christian faith.

THANKS FOR CHOOSING TO LOSE!

It won't be easy, but that's part of the point. We want to do something challenging that will help us connect with (and raise money and prayer for) those who have lost out in a big way because of their love for Jesus. So be encouraged, you're doing something amazing!

Worried about getting bored or tempted to give up the challenge? Don't panic, we're here to help. Use the simple stories, prayers and actions in this guide to keep focused on your persecuted family at key times during your Choose to Lose Challenge.

Through the stories you'll meet some incredible, courageous and brave young Christians who have given up much for Jesus. They'll inspire and challenge you as you've chosen to go without something you love for a short time, and introduce you to a God who is worth giving everything for! These stories would also be great to share to show why you are taking part in the challenge and trying to raise money.

We also know giving up something you love may well leave you with some spare time. Make sure you check out the fundraising ideas in the mini planning guide that will keep you busy and raise extra funds for your persecuted family. Plus, we've included some ideas for things you can do on the next page too! If you've got any questions, want more stories or need any help, get in touch: youth@opendoorsuk.org

IN A GROUP?

Don't forget that there are other resources you can download from opendoorsyouth.org/ **choosetolosepack** with ideas on how you can scale up the challenge to work in a group context. Check them out now!





THINGS TO DO DURING THE CHOOSE TO LOSE CHALLENGE

CHOOSE TO LOSE
4: THINGS TO DO



Giving up something you love won't be easy, especially if it normally takes up a bit of your spare time. So, here's some ideas of things to do as you choose to lose!

1. Use the stories, reflections, and prayers on the following pages to help you connect with people who have lost out because of their faith in Jesus.

2. Go for a prayer walk. Pray for your street, town and for the people included in this guide.

3. Read our World Watch List map and pray for the countries that feature on it. We've sent you one along with this guide in your Choose to Lose pack.

4. Get hold of a copy of *God's Smuggler* by Brother Andrew and have a read of it. You can order a free comic version at opendoorsyouth.org/order

5. Set up a prayer wall. Stick up our World Watch List map on a wall and use it as a starting point for your creative prayers. Add post-it prayers, notes, stickers, Bible verses and more.

6. Talk to people. Tell them you've given up something you love to stand with those who have lost everything because of their faith in Jesus – you could even share some of the stories in this guide.

7. Write to your MP and tell them you are concerned about the persecution of Christians around the world. Ask them what they are doing to help change things. You could even tell them about one of the people whose stories are included on the next few pages. Get your MP's details and address by Googling, 'Who is my MP?'. Follow the top hit and you'll find them!

8. Light a candle. Create some light in the darkness and use it as a way to pray for light and hope to break through for your persecuted family.



CHOOSE TO LOSE
THINGS TO DO: 5

REFLECTION ONE: LOSING HOME

SASER AND MIHEA / LAOS



Saser* (18) and Mihea* (22) from Laos had recently chosen to follow Jesus when their Christian faith was discovered. In the space of an afternoon, they lost their home and safety. People they used to call neighbours, along with the police, questioned and beat them. The mob wouldn't let them go. They were told to sign documents saying they would stop being a Christian and return to the local tribal religion. But they refused. So, the beatings got worse and worse.



Eventually the villagers pushed them out of their house and evicted them from the area. The message was clear: **if you choose Jesus, you're no longer safe here.**

For Saser and Mihea, choosing Jesus has meant losing physical safety, security, and community. Despite wanting to go home, they have moved to a local city where Open Doors partners have been supporting them.

READ

Psalm 46 (It's only 11 verses)

THINK

Have you ever felt threatened or unsafe? It's not a nice feeling. For Saser and Mihea, the threats and violence came from people they knew and had lived peacefully with for years. That must have made things more painful and confusing, like the 'world was giving way'. The psalm you just read paints a picture of a world in trouble, one facing wars, violence and even environmental chaos. It's quite a picture of the world we currently live in. **But in the middle of it all, is God – not distant, but there with us, a real, present and majestic help.**

Perhaps it's that kind of psalm, that knowledge of God being a refuge and strength, that gave Saser and Mihea the courage to keep choosing Jesus, no matter how bad the beatings got. Words like this have depth. **Read through the psalm again three times. Don't rush, but dwell on the words and the images. Memorise the first couple of verses as a source of strength you can draw on when you face troubles.**

PRAY

Father God. I know You hate it when people are threatened and attacked. I know You're on the side of the victims. I know You are the God of light and love. And I know Your love is more powerful than any other force in the universe. Help me know that love more and more and be confident in You as my refuge and strength. I thank You that Saser and Mihea bravely kept choosing You. Give them strength and help them find a new home and community that will love and support them. Amen.

REFLECTION TWO: LOSING LOVED ONES

MANGA, NIGERIA

Manga* is from Nigeria, where each year, thousands of Christians are killed or abducted because of their faith. Sadly, Manga lost his dad when his family was targeted by extremists from a militant Islamic group called Boko Haram.

He was at home watching TV with his two brothers, when suddenly, a group of men stormed into the house. They were intent on causing harm to Manga's family. They dragged Manga, his brothers and dad outside and gave them a

choice: give up their faith in Jesus or die. They all chose Jesus. Horrifically, Manga's dad was killed on the spot. Then he and one of his brothers were knifed.

The killers left, assuming the two boys would also die.

They didn't.

Manga's mum managed to get the brothers to hospital, where their wounds were treated. A few years on, Manga and his brother must live with the physical and mental

scars of what happened. Their choice to stick with Jesus has meant an almost unbearable cost – losing their dad.

But in that loss, and in the scars on his body, Manga has chosen to see something incredible. For him, those scars are a reminder of the existence of God, they are part of his story. He paraphrases a passage from James in the Bible saying *'with the hatred of what these people did, count it all joy. With the second chance God gave me, count it all joy.'*

READ

James 1:2-4

THINK

Manga went through a really difficult situation; his dad was killed, and he and his brother were left with huge scars. If that happened to you, how would you feel about God? **Despite loss, pain, anger and fear, Manga knew of God's incredible love and care for him.** He could see that that had happened to him

was a way to see that God cared for him. Boko Haram, the Islamic extremist group, had wanted to kill him, but God had saved him. His scars are a reminder that God is with him, and despite all he has lost, that brings him joy. Incredible.

Spend a bit of time, thinking of your close family and friends. Thank God for people who you laugh with, people who provide for you, those who teach you and those who deeply love you and want the best for you.

PRAY

Father God, thank You for Manga, and many others around the world who are following You despite losing family and friends. Be with Manga and his family, let them know You are with them and help them know Your love, joy and presence. Like them, in times of pain and loss, help me find Your love and joy. Amen.

REFLECTION THREE: LOSING FREEDOM

RACHEL, MIDDLE EAST



Rachel* found Jesus when she was brought to a secret house church in the Middle East. Being passionate about her new faith, she soon started helping to lead the group. She wasn't naïve, she understood that following Jesus in the Middle East carried risks and that believers could be monitored by authorities acting to restrict the spread of Christianity.

"Of course, the risks crossed my mind every once in a while... But I always tempered that thought,

remembering that God will protect us. I just wanted to worship God. Nothing else mattered to me."

Then one day, there was a knock at the door. The secret police had uncovered her faith and had come to arrest her. Rachel was interrogated by the police and put in a cell for long periods all by herself. Starved and with no contact to the outside world, she understandably wrestled with her faith.

"For days I didn't talk to God," Rachel said. "I was so disappointed in Him. But one night in a dream, I heard John 1:10: 'He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognise Him.'"

"When I had the dream, I started to pray again. I felt that God was going with me everywhere I went."

One month later, Rachel was released.

For believers in Middle East, living a brave faith can cost them everything. But for Rachel, what she gained in Jesus was worth so much more.

"In prison I learned to trust God. Really trust God, on a deep level. I changed."

READ

Matthew 11:1-6

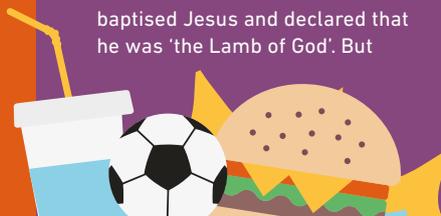
THINK

Rachel doubted. So did John. John was the one who had baptised Jesus and declared that he was 'the Lamb of God'. But

now in prison, John was doubting whether Jesus really was the One. Similarly, Rachel, locked up on her own, was wrestling and questioning. When we face tough times, the questions will come. That is ok. It doesn't mean you've lost your faith or are a bad Christian. It means you care. Rachel and John's stories end differently – John was killed for his faith, Rachel was given her freedom, but both were reminded of God's plan, authority and goodness. **When we go through struggles, can we recognise, like Rachel did, that God is going with us?**

PRAY

Father God. Thank You for brave Christians like Rachel who keep following You even when faced with prison. Be with all those in prison for following You. Give them hope, protection and peace. Help me to find You when I have doubts and questions. Help me know Your presence through good and bad times. Help me choose You, even if it means losing something. Amen.



REFLECTION FOUR: LOSING FAMILY

AKIM / CENTRAL ASIA



Akim* is from Central Asia. He became a Christian two years ago and is a student, so has been living away from home. His family are Muslims, but his two younger sisters also bravely chose to follow Jesus about a year ago too. Their father takes his Muslim faith seriously, and has recently returned home after a few years of being away with work. When he found out that his children had become Christians, he wasn't happy. He would beat Akim's sisters and began forcing them to memorise passages from the Quran.

Being a student, Akim wasn't living at home, and his sisters were afraid to tell him about how their father was treating them. But the girls shared their situation with their pastor, who then got in touch with Akim.

When Akim came home, he tried to reason with his father, but his Dad threatened him and beat him up. In the attack, one of Akim's front teeth was even broken. Their father was in a complete rage, threatening to kill them all because they had chosen to follow Jesus.

So Akim and his sisters fled, leaving behind their family, home and community.

Thankfully, a local Christian family took them in, and they've found support from a local church who have helped to pay to get Akim's broken tooth fixed. A few months on, and Open Doors partners have been supporting Akim and his sisters, who now live in a town far from the village where their father lives. The girls have both now graduated from high school, whilst Akim is continuing his university course and serving his local church. Akim has seen his Dad once since they fled. **Despite the harm he has caused them, Akim and his sisters are praying that their father will come to know Jesus too.**

READ

Luke 14:25-27

THINK

What do your family and friends think about your faith in Jesus? Are they supportive and encouraging, sceptical, not fussed, dismissive or even hostile?

Jesus says we need to hate our family. That sounds quite harsh, but Jesus was making a point. Family and our friendship groups are places where we can find our identity – in Jesus' time, these communities were everything. Jesus is saying, God has to come first, not family, not friends, not community, and not anything else. Think about your life. What gives you value and identity? Friends, a big social media following, your talents, your personality? **Are you prepared to be like Akim and his sisters and find value in what God says about you, before anything else?**

PRAY

Father God, help me find my value in Your love for me. Help that be the place I find my highest value. Be with those like Akim and his sisters who have lost family, friends and community because of their love for You. Let them know Your grace, comfort and hope. Restore relationships, bring healing and salvation. Amen.

LEARN ANYTHING

How was your Choose to Lose Challenge? What did you learn? What was hard, what was inspiring, what kept you going? Did you hear from God? Use this page to write some notes about your experience.



1. What was hardest about giving up something you love?

2. How did you feel during the challenge? Happy, sad, bored? Write below and see if you can explain why.

3. Which story on the previous pages impacted you most? Why?

4. Did God speak to you in any way? Write down what you think He said...

5. Will you change anything after doing the Choose to Lose Challenge?

6. God totally loves the fact you've gone without something you love to help those who have lost everything for Him. Write a short prayer below telling Him what He's worth to you and ask Him to be with all those prepared to lose out for Him!

Now your Choose to Lose Challenge is over, check out the mini planning guide we sent you for info on what to do now, including sending in any funds and letting us know how you got on!

We think you're amazing for getting involved and doing the challenge! Thanks for being such a legend!





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