



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.



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THINGS TO DO: 5

REFLECTION ONE: LOSING FAMILY

PRADIP, NEPAL

Pradip* is from a poor family in Nepal. As a Hindu he'd always hated Christians, so when his sister started going to church both he and his parents would blame her for the struggles they faced.

But he knew Christians were generous, and he was hungry. So when he was invited to church by his cousin, Pradip went, knowing that he might be invited to join a meal after the service. Pradip sat through the service and, as it finished, the pastor prayed for him.

That night, as he thought over what he'd heard in church, Pradip saw a flash of bright light. He had no idea what it was – he asked his family about it and no-one could give him any answers.

CHOOSE TO LOSE
6: LOSING FAMILY

*Name changed for
security reasons

A few days later, still unsure of what had happened, he looked through his sisters Bible. John 8:12, stuck out to him: ***"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."***

At that point, Pradip knew the light was Jesus. He felt a peace and certainty in his heart. And so, like his sister, he became a Christian.

It wasn't long before his parents found out. They were furious. They threw him and his sister out the house. They said he was *'dead to them'*. The whole village turned against them, so Pradip and his sister had to leave, with no support or help from their family.

But the story doesn't end there. They found refuge in their church and managed to keep going in their faith. Today, thanks to your support and with help from Open Doors partners, Pradip has recently graduated from Bible College. He now has a passion to help other young Christians stand firm in their faith too!

THINK

What do your family/those close to you think about your faith in Jesus? Are they supportive and encouraging, sceptical, not fussed, dismissive or even hostile?

READ: LUKE 14:25-27

Jesus says we need to hate our family. He's making a point. Family is a place where we can find our identity – in Jesus' time it was everything. Jesus is saying, God has to come first, not family 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 Pradip 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 Pradip 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.

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LOSING FAMILY: 7

REFLECTION TWO: LOSING HOME

MOHAN, INDIA



Mohan* was still at school when he became a Christian. He's now 21, and the last few years have been hard. His family had to leave their home, community and livelihood – all because they trust in Jesus.

They had good reason to trust. When he was 17, Mohan got seriously ill. He was struggling with his mental and physical health and was becoming a danger to himself and those near him. That's when he was taken to a church. He was prayed for and as he focused on

the words, he saw a light coming towards him. Even though his eyes were closed he felt as though they were being opened. He says on that day, he wasn't simply healed, but he had found peace.

The village chief wasn't happy that Mohan, his mum and siblings had become Christians. The family were warned to leave the church and stop believing in Jesus. They were told they didn't belong in the community anymore. Other villagers started to shun and ignore the family.

Then, the threats turned to reality. A group of villagers came to Mohan's home. They tore the tiles off the roof, broke down the door and destroyed everything in the house. It was a wreck. What's worse was that when Mohan reported it to the police, they took the side of the villagers and warned Mohan and his family to not return to their home or farm their land for at least a year.

With no means of making money or growing food, the family were desperate, but they didn't give up on Jesus. They found shelter in a small shack outside of their village and, thanks to Open Doors partners, were given help and support. And through their example, three other families in the village have also become Christians!

Despite all he has lost, Mohan knows his choice to follow Jesus was worth it. Throughout it all he says that God drew close to his family: ***'Jesus didn't call me to a life of comfort. He will never promise me that. But He does promise to walk with me.'***

THINK

Mohan knew his faith in Jesus would cost. He was prepared to give up his home for a relationship with Jesus. Has following Jesus ever cost you anything?

Mohan was committed to not giving up on Jesus – he must really know God in an incredible way! Think about what you know and have experienced of God. Is that worth everything you have?

READ: LUKE 18:18-30

Jesus answers the question of a young man who seems really holy by pointing to the one thing he couldn't give up: money. What are the things Jesus would call out in our lives? Have you given any of them up as part of the Choose to Lose Challenge? Could you give them up for good, if God asked?

PRAY

Father God, thank You for Mohan and his family. Be with them as they continue to serve You and share about Your love with others. I pray many would come to know God through them. Thank You for their brave faith and help me to follow You with the same courage and belief. Amen.



REFLECTION THREE: LOSING FREEDOM

SOY, LAOS



Soy* is just 16, yet she already knows what it's like to have her freedom taken because of her faith. She's from Laos in South East Asia. After choosing to follow Jesus and leaving behind the traditional beliefs of her village, persecution, threats and exclusion have followed.

CHOOSE TO LOSE
10: LOSING FREEDOM

*Name changed for
security reasons



Two years ago, she was arrested with 14 others at a small church service. When the police arrived they took everyone and kept them in prison without charge for nearly a week. They tried to pressure Soy and the others:

“They said, ‘Christianity is not a good religion so stop practising it. We do not want this religion to spread in our area! If you sign this document and agree to renounce your faith, we will let you go home today.’”

Soy and the others refused. Amazingly, they were set free later that day. Two years on, Soy still faces bad looks and words from others in her village. But she's now enrolled in a school supported by Open Doors partners in a nearby city. The school is full of other young Christians like Soy who have gone through rough times: *“There are many young people who also come to stay in the church to study like me. I don't feel alone here.”*

READ: PHILIPPIANS 3:7-14

Like Soy, Paul, who wrote Philippians, spent time in prison because of his faith in Jesus. Both he and Soy stood firm in their faith even when their freedom was taken away – they show us that Jesus is truly precious and that knowing Him makes everything else seem insignificant – even trials and pain.

THINK

Even when faced with a choice to give up on Jesus or stay in prison, Soy chose Jesus. How do you think you'd respond if you faced that choice? Does everything you are, have done or own, pale in comparison to knowing Jesus? Could you, like Paul and Soy, press on towards the goal that God is calling you to?

PRAY

Father God, thank You for the brave faith of Christians like Soy. Be with all those who have lost their freedom and are in prison because of their love of You. Give them strength and courage. Meet their needs and let them know they are not alone. Help me use the freedom I have to bring Your love to the world. Amen.

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LOSING FREEDOM: 11

REFLECTION FOUR: LOSING SECURITY

SHENOUDA AND ISHAQ, EGYPT



Despite Egypt having the largest number of Christians in any country across North Africa and the Middle East, followers of Jesus are in the minority. With extremist Islamic ideas finding root in some places, violent attacks can happen as Shenouda and Ishaq, two Christian brothers from a place called Al-Nasriyah in Minya, Upper Egypt, can testify. They know what it's like to lose all sense of security because of their faith in Jesus.

Back in late 2019, they were sat outside their house when

a Muslim neighbour walked by shouting at them. He was livid with them, saying that *'Christians should not be out on the street.'*

Both Shenouda and Ishaq bravely told him they wouldn't go inside – they were only by their own home and weren't bothering anyone else. That made their neighbour even more angry – he called them *'dogs'* and threatened to kill them.

The neighbour wasn't lying. He came back with a knife and started to hit and stab the boys. Shenouda

was stabbed in the belly and needed a partial removal of his intestines, while his brother Ishaq required stitches on six different areas of his body.

Despite the deliberate attack, which was witnessed by a neighbour who gave evidence to the authorities, the police refused to classify it as an attempted murder. In fact, they initially said the attack was *'just a normal quarrel.'*

How does this story make you feel? It's a tough one, and unlike the others you've read, there's not a resolution. But it's real - everyday Christians in other parts of the world live out their faith under the threat of violence. They have lost safety and security. As their church family, it's important we know what is happening and it's one of the reasons why you're raising money and prayer by choosing to lose yourself.

READ LUKE 23:32-43

Jesus faced insults, lies and extreme violence, but even in the face of death, Jesus seeks to forgive, to restore what has been broken and to show God's incredible love and grace.

THINK

Must have been extremely hard for Shenouda and Ishaq to move on and forgive, knowing their attacker wasn't punished. Have you faced injustices where you've been hurt, blamed or left out through no fault of your own? How did you feel? Have you been able to forgive? If not, can you pinpoint why? There are some situations where forgiveness might seem impossible, but God can help us to bravely forgive and find freedom from the things that have, and continue to, hurt us.

PRAY

Father God, be with all those who are fearful of losing their security and physical wellbeing because they love You. I pray especially for those who have faced and will face violent attacks. Holy Spirit, be with them and give them courage and peace. Help them stay strong in You. Bring healing from pain and injury. God of truth, ensure justice is done and police and authorities protect all citizens. Let those who have suffered be able to forgive and move on. Help me be brave for You. Help me to forgive and seek forgiveness too. 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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