



# Blackout

## Family Guide

26-28 October 2018

Blackout: A sponsored digital fast to raise money and prayer for silenced, persecuted Christians.  
Could you and your family stay quiet?





# Raising money

**Blackout is a sponsored digital fast. That means, you'll raise money to help persecuted Christians by taking on the challenge of a weekend without the web. This year, the money raised through Blackout will go to help Christians in war-torn Syria who have fled horrific persecution and are still homeless, needing food, medicine and shelter.**

As a family could you raise sponsorship? Or could parents, guardians, aunts, uncles, grandparents and friends sponsor children to stay off tablets, consoles, phones and the TV for 48 hours? We're sure you won't need to convince friends and family of the depth of the challenge!

**Set a fundraising target as a family and see what your efforts could achieve:**

- £52** could provide emergency relief for two families in Syria for a month. This could include food, clothing, medicines, shelter and heating during the freezing winter.
- £125** could provide trauma counselling for two Syrian refugees, traumatised by years of war.
- £238** could provide training to help one person open a small business in Syria, providing a sustainable future for a family.

The simplest way to collect sponsorship is through [justgiving.com/opendoors](https://www.justgiving.com/opendoors). Click the 'Fundraise for us' button and you'll be well away!

# Before you begin

**Before we get fully into some ideas of what you can do as a family, here's some key things to get sorted and think about before the weekend begins.**

## Focus on prayer

Blackout is about going silent online so we can make a massive noise in prayer before God. Persecuted Christians need our prayers. They need us to seek God *with* them - to ask for healing, boldness, courage, perseverance and change. As Brother Andrew, the founder of Open Doors says: "Our prayers can go where we cannot...there are no borders, no prison walls, no doors that are closed to us when we pray."

Prayers don't need to be long or complicated. You're doing this as a family, so make it work for you. Say grace before meals, say short prayers after activities or when you've been sharing some stories of persecuted Christians or the countries they come from. Use the stories in our Blackout Mini Guide help inform your prayers, plus download prayer posters and more at [opendoorsuk.org/blackout](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/blackout)

## Plan and keep busy

If you're going to spend a whole weekend offline, then you'll need to have a plan. Instead of using a screen as a bit of downtime, encourage reading, playing and getting out and about. See our ideas over the page for ways to divide up the weekend and spend time together, and focused on silenced, persecuted Christians.

## Get our resources

Don't forget to order resources from Open Doors, including the World Watch List 2018 map and guide, plus some of our devotional resources, too. We have some child friendly material, plus a whole host of resources made just for teenagers and young adults. Head to [opendoorsuk.org](https://www.opendoorsuk.org) and [opendoorsyouth.org](https://www.opendoorsyouth.org) a few weeks before your Blackout to order what you need.

## Download posters and more

Go to [opendoorsuk.org/blackout](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/blackout) a few days before your fast to download some prayer posters you can print off and put up around your house. Plus there's also a Blackout Mini-Guide with stories and reflective activities to do throughout the weekend, so make sure you check that out, too - it'll definitely help!

## Tell the stories

It's key to keep reminding yourself and your family why you've given up your tech. So, make sure you tell the stories in our Blackout Mini-Guide and other resources to help you connect with your persecuted family. Take it in turns to read the stories to each other at key times throughout the weekend. You could always head to [opendoorsuk.org](https://www.opendoorsuk.org) before the Blackout begins and print off some of the latest stories and situations facing persecuted Christians.



# What to do for a whole weekend with no screens?

As you disconnect from your devices for a whole weekend, intentionally think about how you can do some real-life social networking and really connect with family and friends. Try these ideas....

## 1. Pack away the gadgets

Take a pre-Blackout family selfie to post on your social networking accounts. Make a big noise about why you're going silent for the weekend. Then turn everything off.

Literally, and we mean literally, unplug and pack away your TV, game consoles, tablets and whatever else it is you're giving up. Stash away the Xbox and the PS4 in a cupboard or put them in a box and shut the lid for 48 hours. But the kids get to have some fun, too - this is the one weekend they can swipe the smart phones from their parents - remember you're all in this together: this is a family digital fast, no excuses!

## 2. Switch off together

Once all your tech is hidden, switch-off the wifi (you can have a little wifi switching-off ceremony if you want). As a family, share what you think you will find the hardest about going screen-free. Start the weekend by reading out one of the stories in the Blackout Mini Guide - it'll help you remember the reason why you're doing Blackout in the first place and will help motivate you to keep going. Finally, take a moment to pray for persecuted Christians - those forgotten and silenced simply because they follow Jesus.

## 3. Thankfulness

Grab a jar, some pens and paper. At the start of the weekend, get everyone to write down three things that they are thankful for. Don't share them yet, just pop them in the jar. Just before the end of the weekend, open the jar and let everyone read what they had written out loud. Ask if, after a weekend offline, and after hearing stories from persecuted Christians, whether they would change or add anything to what they had written.

## 4. Gaming with a difference

Go old-school and play your favourite board games throughout the weekend. See who's unbelievable at Uno or a master at Monopoly! You could have a board game competition over the weekend. Who will be crowned the all-round family champion? How many different board games can you play?

## 5. Risk it all

Everyone loves a game of Risk, so get the family together and see who can control the globe. Adapt the game slightly and play it with a copy of the *World Watch List*. When someone conquers an area of the map, see if that includes any countries on the World Watch List. That person can then share some info from the list and say a short prayer for Christians in that region.

## 6. Order a takeaway

Try an Indian and as you eat, share information about Christianity in India, where a rise in Hindu extremism has meant increasing numbers of violent attacks on Christians and churches. Use the current Open Doors World Watch List to help and search [opendoorsuk.org](http://opendoorsuk.org) for recent stories from India to read through and pray about (order the guide online, and print off stories before the weekend begins!)

## 7. (Prayer) walk the dog

Go on a simple prayer walk around your local area. You could act how North Koreans do - stick in two's and three's and whisper a quick prayer to each other when you're sure no-one will see you! Take the World Watch List with you and when you see something that reminds you of a country on the list, look up that country and pray for Christians there (examples could be a Turkish barbers, Chinese or Indian restaurant or Mosque - which could be any majority Islamic country).

## 8. Walk with them

Back in the summer of 2014 when the so-called Islamic State took over large parts of Iraq, Christians living in around Mosul were given an ultimatum: leave, convert to Islam, pay a high tax or die. The vast majority tried to flee, some

on foot, to the safer city of Erbil in Kurdistan. It was a 50km journey. Many left with only what they could carry. You could go for an extended hike - maybe a portion of the distance between Mosul and Erbil - and learn their stories. Plan a route that would take at least a few hours to complete. Use our Walk With Them guide to help you understand what happened and share the stories of those who survived. Download a Walk With Them guide to help plan your hike at [www.opendoorsyouth.org/withthem](http://www.opendoorsyouth.org/withthem)

## 9. Story time

Make sure you have the Blackout Mini Guide available over the weekend. The guide includes five stories with associated actions and prayers that you could build into your weekend offline. But don't just stop there, use the time to learn more stories. You could get copies of God's Smuggler, the best selling story of Brother Andrew's first Bible smuggling trips, and read them together. There's a full book, and even a retro comic version that is perfect for anyone who isn't a big fan of reading! You can get free copies of these at [opendoorsuk.org](http://opendoorsuk.org) and [opendoorsyouth.org/guts](http://opendoorsyouth.org/guts)

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## 8. Write a letter

You'll need to plan ahead for this one. Before your Blackout find out about some of the latest opportunities to write a letter to a persecuted Christian at [www.opendoorsuk.org/act/letter](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/act/letter). Print off some of the info and during the weekend, go old school and write a letter as a family. Draw or doodle a nice cover design to your letter to add a personal touch. Then write a few lines each telling the person about your family and share some special Bible verses to encourage them. Let the person know you'll be praying for them - and spend time doing just that!

## 11. Go all out

Still stuck for ideas? During the day on the Saturday, make plans to go out as a family. It might simply be a day to visit your wider family or have a family picnic. You could go all out and do a big family outing - somewhere you can all enjoy and create some fun family memories (is it possible without any polished Instagram or Facebook updates?).

## 9. Penalty shoot-out / football comp

If some in your family are mad on football, why not host a mini-football competition, penalty shoot-out or keep up challenge. Teams or players could adopt one of the countries on the World Watch List that featured in this year's World Cup (Iran, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Mexico or Colombia). Nominate a commentator who can use the World Watch List to introduce the teams before the game starts. They could list key facts and even say a prayer for those chosen countries! And of course, spend time making an imitation Jules Rimet trophy.



## 10. Make the most of our posters!

Download and print some or all of the Blackout prayer posters. Put them up in different rooms around your house or garden - put them somewhere obvious, like the back of a lloo door, so that people see them. Every time you walk past one, say a quick prayer for Christians in that country, using the points on the poster. You could theme the room or location like that country to help focus thoughts, or add post it notes and a pen and get people to write prayers and stick them on the poster.

## 10. Fire pit

Brother Andrew, the founder of Open Doors, once said, "The bigger the darkness, the easier it is to spot your little light." So create some light in the darkness. Wrap up warm and spend the evening around a camp fire sharing and chatting about everything you've all learnt about yourselves and the persecuted church.

Encourage your family by sharing that despite the darkness in the world, God is using Christians to bring light and hope. In fact, God is lighting fires all around the world. Check out the first two stories in the Blackout Mini-Guide for inspiration and other ideas. And of course, get the marshmallows out, too!

## 12. Make a meal together

Get the whole family involved in cooking up a tasty meal over the Blackout weekend. Look through the World Watch List and pick a meal or series of dishes from countries that feature on the list. As you prepare the meal and eat it together, share information about where the dishes are from.

## 13. Share on Sunday

Take the opportunity to share as a family in your church service. It'll be the perfect moment to raise awareness about persecuted Christians and muster up some more sponsorship money (remember to take a bunch of sponsorship forms with you). You could also lead prayers for the persecuted church in the service - if you do this, spend time over the Blackout weekend writing your prayers. Here are some other things you could do as you lead prayers:

- Show the Blackout promo video
- Share one of the stories in the Blackout Mini-Guide
- Share why as a family you decided to join the Blackout
- Share what you learnt.

As an added extra, bake some cakes over the weekend to sell at church on the Sunday. Who can resist a cupcake?

## 14. Make a family prayer bowl

Don't let the people you've read and prayed for over the Blackout weekend be forgotten as soon as you switch the wifi back on again! As a family commit to praying for the persecuted church as part of your family routine.

Get some small slips of paper and write down some of the names of people whose stories you've connected with during Blackout and pop them in a bowl. You can add to these afterwards when you read and see or hear other stories from Open Doors. Then think closer to home - are there people in your community, in your school, in your road, in your family you can pray for? Pop them in the bowl and maybe every time you eat tea together get out your family prayer bowl and pray.

"If we would understand the potential of our prayers, we would be on our knees a hundred times a day and ask Him things that would turn the world upside down."

**Brother Andrew, founder of Open Doors**

## 15. Debrief

Just before you switch the wifi back on again, make sure you gather together as a family. Share what you've learnt, and what was good, bad or hard. Was it easier than expected to spend time together offline? Ask which stories or situations have stuck with your family and pray together quickly one last time that God would comfort, protect and equip Christians around the world who are facing pressure, intimidation, arrest and violence because of their love of Jesus.



# After the Blackout

## Reflect

How was it? A whole weekend without the internet. Did you and your family survive? What did you learn, enjoy, find difficult? Were there any stories that challenged you? Did God speak to you?

## Collect sponsorship

Collect in all your sponsorship money. Don't leave it too long, and make sure you thank the people who supported you. You might even get a chance to explain what you did in your church or at your small group/youth group!

## Tell us

We'd love to know what you did, what you learnt as well as any other feedback from you. Plus, you'll need to send us the money you raised. Post us a cheque, completed sponsor forms and a letter in the envelope provided or use **FREEPOST, Open Doors with Brother Andrew** and that will get to us (no stamp needed). If you used **justgiving.com**, email us at **inspire@opendoorsuk.org** to tell us how you got on.

## Just the beginning

We hope you've been inspired by the guts, courage and determination of your persecuted family. Stay connected with Open Doors for more ways to pray, give and speak up for the persecuted church. Make sure you get our magazine and monthly emails. More details at **opendoorsuk.org**. (There are youth-specific options at **opendoorsyouth.org** too)

## Get back online

Make a massive noise about what you did and why online. Share your story and those of the persecuted Christians you were praying for. Make sure you follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for up-to-date news and more.

### Find us at:

**Under 21?**   /opendoorsyouth  
 /opendoorsyouthuk

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