

*OpenDoors*

# Blackout Mini Guide

26-28 October 2018

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



**No Instagram.  
No Snapchat.  
No What's App.  
No gaming.  
No Spotify.  
No phone.  
No internet.**

**48 hours  
offline.**

**Complete  
digital blackout.**

**Could you  
cope?**

2



### **What?**

Blackout is a sponsored 48-hour digital fast for persecuted Christians. That means **raising money and prayer** by spending a whole weekend without your phone, the internet, social networking or anything else involving the web.

### **Why?**

Around the world, many Christians have no voice. Millions are persecuted, threatened, beaten, arrested, tortured and some are even killed for their choice to follow Jesus. They are being silenced. By getting sponsored to go quiet online, you'll raise money for Christians in Syria who have fled horrific persecution and are still homeless, needing food, medicine and shelter. Plus you can use the time you're not spending on your phone in prayer, making a massive noise before God for your persecuted family.

### **When?**

Blackout 2018 is taking place from **7pm on Friday 26 October** to **7pm on Sunday 28 October** (but, if the dates don't suit, you can do Blackout whenever you like!)

### **Let us know you're taking part**

**Under 21?** Get extra resources and downloads at [opendoorsyouth.org/blackoutpack](http://opendoorsyouth.org/blackoutpack)

**If you're over 21,** head to [opendoorsuk.org/blackout](http://opendoorsuk.org/blackout) for extra materials.



# How to Blackout

## 1. Fast

Nope. This isn't about being speedy. It's about giving up your tech and going quiet online for a whole weekend. It's about understanding what it is to be denied the freedom to talk and share our lives openly, like many persecuted Christians around the world.

But it's more than that, too. If we're honest, we're addicted to our phones. We depend on them to feed our cravings constantly throughout the day. So we'll give them up to refocus and put our attention back where it belongs, on God, the almighty creator and loving father.

This is about connection, both with our persecuted family and with God. Two days limiting our freedom to **raise money and prayer** for persecuted Christians. Two days without the constant distraction of our phones to refocus and seek Him.

## 2. Pray

Blackout is about going silent online so we can make a massive noise in prayer before God. As you'll read over the next few pages, 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."**

Use the stories in this little booklet to guide your prayers, plus download prayer posters, a prayer guide and loads more helpful material at  
[opendoorsyouth.org/blackoutpack](http://opendoorsyouth.org/blackoutpack)  
(under 21s)  
[opendoorsuk.org/blackout](http://opendoorsuk.org/blackout) (over 21s)

## 3. Raise

Prayer and action go together. That's why we want you to get **sponsored, raising money** and **awareness** so the church around the world can keep shining the light and hope of God's love. For 2018, money raised through Blackout will go to help the church in Syria. Check out the next page to see what your efforts could achieve, and how in going silent, you can give a voice to the voiceless.



# Set a target

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. Use the sponsor forms we've provided, or set up an account at [justgiving.com/opendoors](http://justgiving.com/opendoors) to help you collect money. Here's what you 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.

**£98**

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.

# Lone wolf or groupie?

**Blackout is pretty simple. You just need to give up the internet and any internet-connected tech for a weekend. Then you pray. You can do that on your lonesome, or in a group.**

## Lone wolf

If you're doing Blackout on your own, make sure you download our prayer posters and get our latest World Watch Map. Stick them up and turn a wall in your house into a mini prayer space!

## Groupie

Go big! Set up a prayer room, run a service or gathering and make a massive noise together in prayer.

If you're a youth leader, we have a bunch of youth sessions with videos and discussion points you can use to explore the faith and passion of persecuted Christians, plus we have some ready-made talks you can adapt and use, too!



**Under 21 or a youth leader?**  
Get a bunch of fresh resources at [opendoorsyouth.org/blackoutpack](http://opendoorsyouth.org/blackoutpack)

**Over 21 or looking for family material?** Get extra downloads (including a family-friendly guide) at [opendoorsuk.org/blackout](http://opendoorsuk.org/blackout)



# Before you Blackout

## Tell people and get sponsored

Get the word out and tell people what you're doing. Don't forget to get sponsored too. Use the editable posters, flyers and forms at [opendoorsyouth.org/blackoutpack](http://opendoorsyouth.org/blackoutpack) and [opendoorsuk.org/blackout](http://opendoorsuk.org/blackout) to help. You might also want to set up a JustGiving fundraising page. Head to [justgiving.com/opendoors](http://justgiving.com/opendoors) to find out more.

## Download and order

You won't be able to access the web once Blackout begins, so get organised by downloading and printing things off a few days before.

### Under 21? Check out

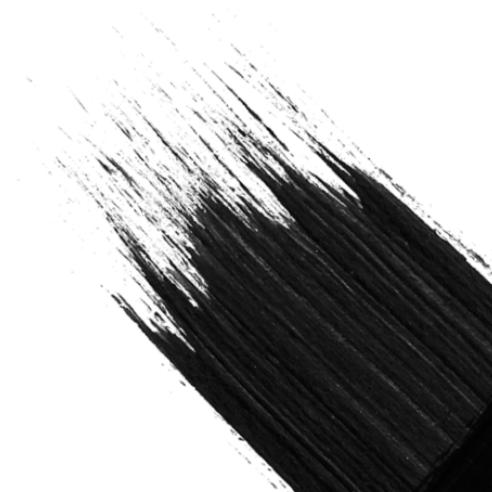
[opendoorsyouth.org/blackoutpack](http://opendoorsyouth.org/blackoutpack).

Over 21? Visit [opendoorsuk.org/blackout](http://opendoorsuk.org/blackout).

There are also plenty of printed resources and booklets you can order from us - have a look at the links above for more.

## Seal away

Just before you begin your Blackout, grab your phone, tablet, laptop, Xbox or any other internet-connected device that might tempt you and place them in a cupboard or put them in a box. Seal them away, and stick a note on the door or box saying 'Don't open until 7pm Sunday!'



# Blackout rules

1.

Blackout lasts from 7pm Friday to 7pm Sunday\*.

2.

During that time, you'll have no access to any internet-connected device. This includes phones, laptops, tablets, TVs and gaming consoles<sup>^</sup>.

3.

No online streaming of music, no access to online gaming, TV, social feeds or anything else that you'd do online. This is about disconnecting.

## That's pretty much it.

\*You can, of course, do Blackout for a longer, or shorter period. Some groups have done 24 hours, whilst other hardcore individuals have done a full week.

<sup>^</sup>Please use your common sense. If you're in an emergency, use your phone. If you have to do homework, study or work then get online, but only for those reasons (no entertainment).



# During your Blackout



**What are you going to do without any internet-connected tech? Don't panic, we're here to help. Use these simple stories to keep you focused on your persecuted family at key times during your Blackout.**

Over the next few pages you'll find five stories, all with prayers and actions. Read and reflect on these at the suggested times over the weekend to help you bring structure and focus to your digital fast.

And remember, you'll be getting sponsored to raise money specifically for Christians that have fled persecution in Syria. Check out the first and fourth reflections to get a better understanding of what life is like for Christians in Syria.

## Want more?

If you're under 21 make sure you also get our latest World Watch Map and 'Guts and Courage' devotional (all free) to help you connect with the stories and faith of persecuted Christians over the course of the weekend (order these at [opendoorsyouth.org/guts](http://opendoorsyouth.org/guts)). There's also a bunch of downloadable materials, including prayer posters and more at [opendoorsyouth.org/blackoutpack](http://opendoorsyouth.org/blackoutpack)

If you're over 21, or looking to do Blackout as part of a family, you can order additional resources and download some extra material at [opendoorsuk.org/blackout](http://opendoorsuk.org/blackout)



# 'Aren't you scared?'

*Reflection one: 8pm Friday night*

**Begin your digital fast by being reminded of how awesome and incredible the God we serve is.**  
**This story from Syria will increase your expectations of what our amazing God can do!**

Pastor Boutros has been leading a church in Syria, and with your help, he and his church community have supported over 4,000 displaced families. Before the war, he had a church of 25 people. It has since grown to over 200, and about 90% are new Christians, many from a Muslim background. Here, Pastor Boutros tells the story of a sister from his church that remained in war-torn parts of Syria.

"She was taking food and supplies to people who were living in an area

controlled by rebels. One time the rebels tried to force themselves into her house. She was able to stop them because she was protecting a number of women in her house.

"They told her: 'Aren't you scared that we may come and slaughter you?' She answered: 'No, I am not afraid because I have the mighty God with me and he is protecting me.' The men left, but not for long. Pastor Boutros continues the story:

"After a while these same people came to her house, not to threaten her but because the head of their group wanted to listen to her and hear her story.

"When she went to visit him, he was surprised to see how a woman would stand in front of him unafraid. He said: 'Usually when men come to me, they will be shaking. I want to know, who is behind you? Who is the source of your strength? Which country is helping you?'

"She replied: 'Do you really want to hear who is behind me? Would you give to me the right to share everything?'

"While the men were pointing guns at her, she shared with them about Jesus, the Lord of Peace, who was giving her courage. She spoke for 25 minutes. They did not interrupt her and listened attentively. At the end, the leader was crying. After that meeting, he disappeared; we don't know what happened to him. But we know that God took him out of this place."

**Amazing story! Despite war and terror, God is at work in Syria! Wow!**

## **Action:**

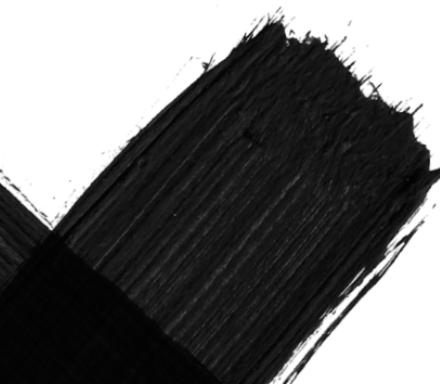
At the start of your fast, spend time simply worshipping God. Thank Him that He cares enough to meet people where they are at - even rebel leaders. Pray through Psalm 95. Whisper the words to 'Amazing Grace' or your favourite worship song. And, finally, spend time praying that people seeking truth across the Middle East would come to know Jesus. Thank God for this lady and pray for many more like her.



# Light a candle

**Reflection two: 10am Saturday morning**

**Okay, you're over 12 hours in.  
How's the fast going? Tempted  
by your social feeds? Well, to  
take your mind off what's  
happening on Instagram,  
spend some time reading this  
story from Pakistan. You'll need  
a candle and some matches  
for the activity at the end.**



Being a Christian in Pakistan comes at a cost. A few years ago at Easter, the Taliban, the self-proclaimed Islamic State and other Islamic extremist groups had sent out warnings that Christians would suffer during Easter. The Christians knew they were serious – church bombings have become horrifically frequent in Pakistan, particularly around Christian celebrations.

But despite the very real danger, this group of Christians decided to gather in their church the night before Easter – the threats of extremists would not stop them from meeting to worship Jesus.

Each person held a candle, but the church leader had forgotten to tell people to come and light them from a candle at the front. Then a little girl, just six years old, went forward to light her candle, and began to walk around the room, using her candle to light everyone else's.

When asked why she decided to light all the candles she said: "Because the candles remind us that even in the darkness of the tomb, there was the hope of Jesus' promise. When Jesus makes a promise, it is like a candle given to us when the lights go out. It is a promise that the lights will come back on again."

It was a promise the Christians needed to hold on to. The next day, on Easter Sunday, a bomb attack in Lahore killed 75 Christians, and injured hundreds of others.

## Action:

Grab a candle and some matches. Head to a dark room. Sit down and light the candle. As you watch the darkness disappear, begin praying for Christians in places like Pakistan, India, Nigeria, Syria and Iraq where violence against Christians can be a daily reality. Pray for light, love and hope to shine through.



# Little black book

**Reflection three: 3pm Saturday afternoon**

**Getting tempted yet? Realising how difficult it is to do life without the internet? Use this simple reflection and the activity below to help take your mind off your phone, Xbox or tablet!**

Lee Joo-Chan\* didn't find out his parents were Christians until he was an adult. Growing up in North Korea, his parents had to keep their faith secret from him for his own safety. Simply being found with Christian materials could mean the arrest of a whole family, and teachers often questioned children about the activities of their parents. But even though he didn't know about their faith, he did know they were different.

\*Name changed for security reasons

"Everybody called them 'Communist parents,' because they took care of the sick, the poor and the needy. Every night they went to the garden and dug up a pot. They took out a black book and read from it.

Aloud, but whispering. I wasn't allowed to read from [it]... But I heard them whisper the words, and I knew it was their source of wisdom. I also knew that if I ever talked about this to someone else, our family would be taken away.

"They always told us never to say something about the book to other people. I knew they were not playing games with us, and that we all would be killed if other people found out about this forbidden book. Sometimes my mother would say that God was alive and that we had to obey Him. But she never mentioned Jesus. She couldn't. It would have been too dangerous."

The Bible is precious. We might have multiple copies of Scripture, and we can access God's Word whenever we want through our phones, but does that mean

we're guilty of not treasuring it as we should? North Korean Christians know just how precious and dangerous God's Word is, and they can inspire us to have the same attitude.

## **Action:**

Spend a few minutes writing down as many Bible verses as you can from memory. How many did you manage? Now open up Psalm 23. This psalm is a favourite of many North Korean Christians. Write it out a few times, and try to memorise it. As you write the words, imagine what it would be like to only have small fragments of the Bible, or to only be able to read it in secret, late at night. Over the next few hours, let the lines of the psalm get into your head, and pray out each line, asking that North Korean Christians would know God's love and protection as they walk through the valley of the shadow of death.



# Staying put

Reflection four: 8pm Saturday evening

**Nice one! You've done a full 24-hours offline. That's pretty amazing! Good job. Check out this story to help you connect with Christians in Syria who have fled horrific persecution. And remember, money you raise through Blackout will be going to Syria, too!**

It's been over seven years since the war in Syria began. It all started with a small uprising after some graffiti was sprayed on a wall in a rural town. Now the conflict has engulfed the entire country, and Iraq too. Around five million people have left Syria since the war began, but six million are displaced within Syria itself. Of those who remain, some are simply too old, unwell or poor to leave, and continue to

need support, while others have chosen to stay and serve those in need.

One man from Aleppo spoke to an Open Doors contact about the difficulties of deciding whether to stay or leave. His wife is pregnant, and they have had two children during the war. He said, "In our road the war is finished. But during the war it was very difficult to live with these bombs. Two bombs hit our apartment building. Here in this street maybe a hundred hit. I don't know the number, a lot of bombs came down here in the war.

"But we live in God. We stayed with our faith. We prayed as a family here. We went to the church. I don't believe that we should just travel and run out. Of course we thought a lot about leaving, about searching for a visa. A lot of countries gave me a visa, but when I started to pack my bags, I wanted to stay. I love my country. I love my people. I have a mission to stay here and help people."

## Action:

It takes guts and courage to choose to stay in Syria, especially if you're a Christian. Followers of Jesus have been targeted and whole communities have been uprooted. Open Doors partners are supporting up to 12,000 families in Syria each month, and money you raise through Blackout will continue this vital work. But you can also send hope in other ways. Spend 15 minutes with some pens and paper and create a message of hope for families from the Middle East. You could illustrate a Bible verse, write out a prayer of encouragement or simply jot down an inspiring message. After the Blackout weekend, take a picture of your creations and email them to [inspire@opendoorsuk.org](mailto:inspire@opendoorsuk.org).

We'll add them to a special encouragement app that is used by thousands of Middle Eastern Christians. Good, huh?



# Following God's lead

**Reflection five: 3pm Sunday afternoon**

**You're nearly there. Just a few hours to go! Check out this story to see how you can spend the next few hours, and your time when you get back online, to follow God's lead and see amazing things happen - it is an incredible story!**

A couple of Christian students in East Africa were travelling home from an Open Doors seminar when they saw a young Muslim man tying a rope around a tree.

They stopped, and innocently asked what he was doing.

"I want to kill myself" he replied. "I say my prayers five times a day, and I read the Quran. I have money, a wife and children, but I have no peace. I want peace. That is my one big wish."

The students began sharing their faith with the man. His name was Keder\* and they began explaining that even though the Quran teaches that Jesus is a prophet, He is also the Prince of Peace. They invited him to church and Keder followed. During the service they all prayed together.

The next day Keder came along to a second Open Doors seminar. The course leader was slightly nervous – he was worried Keder was there to cause trouble and disrupt the meeting. But Keder stood up and shared his testimony. He told the group:

"I've found the peace I was seeking. Until now, Islam was the only genuine religion for me because it was straightforward. I studied the Quran for five years, and I did my rituals daily, but none of that gave me peace, so I decided to kill myself. Then I met Christians yesterday, and everything

changed. Muslims are hurting without the knowledge of the Scriptures, therefore pray for them."

Keder is now secretly studying the Bible, and attending church. He is the first Muslim in his area to accept Christ. The peace of Jesus has made Keder unafraid – he wants to witness to his Muslim brothers. He is even prepared to die for Jesus.

Keder's story is amazing. But what is even more amazing is that if it wasn't for the students simply asking what he was doing, none of it would have happened. As your digital fast comes to an end, think about ways you can respond to what God is doing around you and get involved in it!

## Action:

As a response, think about how you can follow God's lead in simple ways. Go for a walk and stop and ask someone what they are doing, or how they are feeling. Keep it simple, but start a conversation and see where it goes!!

\*Name changed for security reasons



# After the Blackout

## Reflect

How was it? A whole weekend without the internet. Did you 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 and hear your feedback, too. 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**, do email us to let us know how everything went. Use one of the email addresses on the back cover.

## Get back online

Make a massive noise online 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

**Over 21?** /opendoorsuk



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