



Tears of Gold

SMALL-GROUP GUIDE

Discover how God is turning grief to joy for the women of the persecuted church.

Introduction

This small-group session is based around the portraits of seven courageous Nigerian women, who have endured terrible abuse and persecution because of their gender and their faith.

One set of their portraits was painted by UK artist Hannah Rose Thomas who travelled to Nigeria to help with Open Doors-supported trauma care workshops. The other set was painted by the women themselves, during the workshop.

Many of the women painted tears of gold on their faces. That's what this small-group session is all about. It's about how beauty can emerge from brutality; how trauma and tragedy can be transformed through the love of God into signs of hope, forgiveness and redemption; how tears of pain can become tears of gold.

Pray, reflect and see how God is bringing restoration to the lives of persecuted believers:
www.opendoorsuk.org/seechange

Some might find these accounts distressing. Please reassure participants that these women have all bravely chosen to make their stories public, and that they are being well cared for.

Getting ready

In preparation for your session, read through the instructions and familiarise yourself with the women's stories, below. Select two or three stories and find the corresponding portraits by Hannah Rose Thomas and the women's self-portraits in the *Tears of Gold* PowerPoint slides or in this guide.

You'll also need to download the video '**Aisha: How God Looks at Me**' or have it ready to livestream.

Participants will need paper and pencils at the ready.

PART ONE

See.

OPENING EXERCISE: DRAW EACH OTHER

- “While I was drawing I started feeling happy because now the world will know about our pain. God has brought you so that you will help us.” Aisha, trauma survivor.
- Ask each person to draw someone else in the group. While drawing, find out what you can about each other—your likes, dislikes, etc. What did you ‘see’?

SHOW THE VIDEO

- Show the video: ‘**Aisha: How God Looks at Me**’, and reflect on Aisha’s story

READ GENESIS 16:1-15 - THE STORY OF HAGAR

- What’s your response to this story? How do the characters act? Why do you think Sarai treats Hagar in this way?
- Hagar is the only person in the Bible who gets to ‘name’ God (16:13). What is the significance of this name? Why is it important that God ‘sees’ Hagar?

THE PORTRAITS

- Select one of your chosen stories. Show the woman’s portrait by Hannah Rose Thomas. Ask the group to share their first impressions of her. Who is she? What is she feeling?
 - Read part one of the woman’s story and pray for her.
 - Repeat with the other stories you have selected.
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PART TWO

Change.

LOOK AT THE SELF-PORTRAITS

- Show the matching self-portraits for the stories you have selected.
- Discuss: How have the women painted themselves?
- Read part two of the women’s stories. These feature discussion questions for your group to talk about.

REFLECT TOGETHER

- Ask everyone what struck them most about the women’s stories? Almost all the women added tears of gold to their self-portraits. Why did they do that? What do you think it symbolised?

In the words of one of the trauma care workers: “The trauma care programme was full to the brim with feelings of pain and hatred and many tears. But, eventually, there was also laughter, restoration of hope and emotional freedom.”

PART THREE

Tears of Gold

TAKE ACTION

How can you help someone’s tears become tears of gold?

It is good to ‘see’ these women, but there is more that we can do to change their lives. Think about what you, as a church, community or group, can do to offer comfort and hope.

- **Give to help persecuted women and girls** like those on the postcards – go to opendoorsuk.org/seechange to find out more.
- **Commit to pray regularly for persecuted women:** find out about the many ways you can do this on the **Open Doors website**.

CLOSE AND BLESSING

- End with prayer.



AISHA

Portrait by Hannah Rose Thomas

See. AISHA Part 1

Portrait by Hannah Rose Thomas

"On that fateful night I was asleep in my room with my husband. My children were in the other room. Then we heard a woman in our compound crying."

Aisha's village was attacked by militant Fulani herdsmen. They burst into the house and found a Bible in the room so assumed her husband was a pastor. They took him away. Aisha was badly beaten and brutally assaulted by two of the men.

Thankfully, some hours later her husband returned. "As I told him everything I began to cry bitterly. But then he told me I should wipe my tears, that he would stand by me and never leave me."

A CULTURE OF SHAME

The response of Aisha's husband is unusual. In many cultures women not only face abuse but are then shamed because they have been abused. The victims of kidnap and rape can find themselves ostracised by society - even though what happened to them is in no way their fault.

PRAY

God of all comfort,

Help us to see these women as You see them. Help us not to turn away from their tears and pain. Bring healing and restoration, Lord. Wipe away their tears and comfort them, we pray.

Amen. I see you.



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Open Doors UK & Ireland is registered Charity in England and Wales No. 1125484, Scotland SC043710, Republic of Ireland No. 20140984. Aisha's portrait ©2018 Hannah Rose Thomas

Change. AISHA Part 2

Self-portrait by Aisha, painted as part of an art therapy workshop run by Open Doors partners

"If I hadn't attended the programme, I don't know what my life would have been. I would still have been in pain, with nobody around me to strengthen me. But now I have received this trauma healing I am so happy. I am overwhelmed with the love and compassion shown to us.

"In the course of the workshop I saw how God thinks about me, how He looks at me... God has promised that one day He will wipe away all our tears. All the pain and the worries we have faced, one day He will wipe away our tears.

"Because of the joy and encouragement I received, if it were possible, I would want all women who have gone through this trauma to attend."

THINK

Aisha says that while painting her self-portrait, "I saw how God thinks about me, how He looks at me." Look at the portrait. What do you think God sees in Aisha?

WHAT CAN I DO?

Use the *Portraits and Prayer* guide to pray for Aisha this week. Remember especially Christian women who face shame even though nothing that has happened to them is their fault.

Give to see change for persecuted women around the world. Go to www.opendoorsuk.org/seechange to find out how you can help.



AISHA

Self-portrait



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CHRISTINA

Portrait by Hannah Rose Thomas

See. CHRISTINA PART 1

Portrait by Hannah Rose Thomas

Christina and her husband were making their way home after a long day in the field. But they did not know that Fulani militants were in the area and that everyone else in their village had already fled. The Fulani forced their way into her home, holding guns and threatening to kill her. Christina's husband was tied up and forced to watch as two of the men raped her.

Christina is deeply traumatised after the attack. She wants the world to know the pain Christians are experiencing.

"My prayer is that we should pray for peace in Nigeria because I don't know how I will end up."

ABOUT THE FULANI

The Fulani are a tribe of nomadic, predominantly Muslim Fulani cattle herders. Climate change and population growth have led the Fulani herdsmen to seek new grazing lands – often violently seizing these from long-established Christian communities. The murder of entire families in their homes has led many Christians to claim that this amounts to a campaign of ethno-religious cleansing.

PRAY

Lord of all nations,

Thank You for the courage of Christina. As she asked, I pray for Nigeria. Grant wisdom to the government. Shake them into action. May those in power stand up against men of violence. Help me to raise my voice on behalf of those who suffer.

Amen. I see you.



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Christina's portrait ©2018 Hannah Rose Thomas

Change. CHRISTINA Part 2

Self-portrait by Christina, painted as part of an art therapy workshop run by Open Doors partners

"I can remember when I came [for the first trauma workshop], when I went back home, I felt as if I was a new person...I am so happy and overwhelmed because of the programme.

"I remember I didn't have money to come but I am so glad I could, as I have recovered so much in encouragement for my life and from the love I have felt from you all."

THINK

Christina asks us to pray for peace in Nigeria. The biblical view of peace is about much more than just the absence of war. It is about health, wholeness, fullness of life. What might that look like for Christina?

ACT

Use the *Portraits and Prayer* guide to pray for Christina this week. Pray especially for peace in Nigeria.

Give to see change for persecuted women around the world. Go to www.opendoorsuk.org/seechange to find out how you can help.



CHRISTINA

Self-portrait



See. FLORENCE Part 1

Portrait by Hannah Rose Thomas

Florence was only 10 years old when she was attacked by Fulani militants.

"I was sleeping at home with my grandmother when they came and raped me. From that time on I cry a lot and I don't find anything that makes me happy.

"I want you to pray against a spirit of fear in me because just seeing a cow makes me fear and I don't know how it will be."

CHILDREN

The abuse suffered by girls around the world is truly shocking. In Nigeria, many hundreds of children like Florence have become victims of gender-based violence. In Egypt, there is evidence that Christian girls are targeted and groomed by Islamic extremists.

PRAY

Lord of all comfort,

I pray for the children like Florence. Those who live in fear because of the awful things that have been done to them. Bring peace to those who are scared; bring healing to those whose scars cut so deep. Be with Florence and surround her with people who love her. Take away her fear.

Amen. I see you.



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Florence's portrait ©2018 Hannah Rose Thomas

Change. FLORENCE Part 2

Self-portrait by Florence, painted as part of an art therapy workshop run by Open Doors partners

"When I came for the programme, after the first two days I started feeling happy and I felt as if everything was going away gradually... And when I went back, a lot of people started saying "What is happening?" and I told them 'Nothing is happening; it's peace of mind.'

"When I was drawing, I was thinking of what happened to me that day. But after I finished drawing, I totally forgot about the whole thing."

"I want to go to school so please pray for provision so that I can go to school."

THINK

Read Isaiah 61:1-3, with its wonderful words about comfort for those who mourn, and crowns of beauty instead of ashes. What do you think 'good news' is for girls like Florence? What will bring joy back into her life?

WHAT CAN I DO?

Use the *Portraits and Prayer* guide to pray each day for the children who are trafficked, abducted or abused because they are Christians and because they are girls.

Open Doors supports children who face persecution. As well as helping them through deeply traumatic experiences, our partners support them in education and with psychological, spiritual and physical needs. Go to www.opendoorsuk.org/seechange to find out how you can help.



FLORENCE

Self-portrait



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GAMBO

Portrait by Hannah Rose Thomas

See. GAMBO Part 1

Portrait by Hannah Rose Thomas

Gambo was gathering firewood on her farm when she was attacked by a Fulani boy who threatened, "If you do not allow me to sleep with you, I'm going to kill you."

She refused. "I told him in the name of Jesus I will never allow you to sleep with me. If you want to take my life, just take my life."

She was beaten unconscious. When she woke she was naked, bleeding and unable to walk. Gambo has still not fully recovered from her injuries and is in a court case with her attacker.

JUSTICE

For Christians around the world – and especially Christian women – justice is hard to come by. Their testimony is often overlooked by the courts, their cases uninvestigated by the police. In the northern states of Nigeria, Christians are a minority. In 12 of these states, Sharia – Islamic law – is enforced and the local government is heavily weighted in favour of the Muslim majority.

PRAY

Lord of all nations,

Thank You for the bravery of Gambo. Thank You that she is prepared to fight for justice. May those in power listen to her plea. Help those of us who have freedom to speak out to raise our voices on behalf of victims of injustice around the world.

Amen. I see you.



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Gambo's portrait ©2018 Hannah Rose Thomas

Change. GAMBO Part 2

Self-portrait by Gambo, painted as part of an art therapy workshop run by Open Doors partners

"I want to thank God because after that programme things have changed a little for me. I am often falling ill, but I just want to thank God for the peace He has restored in my heart.

"While I was drawing, I had mixed feelings. The first feeling is a feeling of anger and bitterness and that is why I drew myself not smiling, and then the second feeling is a feeling of a joy, knowing that God loves and still protects and takes care of me."

THINK

Look at Gambo's portrait in the light of her story. What word do you think describes her? What name would you give her?

WHAT CAN I DO?

Gambo still suffers from the injuries that she has, particularly to her arm, which was broken in the attack. Use the *Portraits and Prayer* guide to pray for Gambo this week, that she would receive healing.

You can help women in Nigeria receive the same peace that Gambo feels. Go to www.opendoorsuk.org/seechange to find out how you can help.



GAMBO

Self-portrait



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LADI

Portrait by Hannah Rose Thomas

See. LADI PART 1

Portrait by Hannah Rose Thomas

Ladi was only home because it was a school holiday. She never made it back to school. She was abducted by Boko Haram extremists. She was forced to marry a Boko Haram soldier.

"I became pregnant and gave birth to my son, Emmanuel," she recalls. "From there I decided that it was time for me to escape. One night, I took to my heels and kept running."

Ladi now lives in a camp for internally displaced people (IDPs) where she has been accepted by some but mocked by others because of her ordeal.

LIFE IN AN IDP CAMP

Many displaced Christians end up in IDP camps where life can be hard. Open Doors has heard stories of Christians in IDP camps being forced to convert to Islam to get food. "If you are a Christian you are harassed and insulted. 'Get out infidel!' is what you hear all the time," said one former resident. Christian women are particularly vulnerable – there have been reports of Christian girls being trafficked out of camps where they should have been safe.

PRAY

Emmanuel, God with us

Comfort women and girls like Ladi with the knowledge that You are with them. In the name of Jesus – Emmanuel – who has saved us all.

Amen. I see you.



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Ladi's portrait ©2018 Hannah Rose Thomas

Change. LADI Part 2

Self-portrait by Ladi, painted as part of an art therapy workshop run by Open Doors partners

"Before I could not hold a pen and do anything, but now, through this art project I have learnt how to draw.

"I drew myself and when I looked at it this morning, I saw how beautiful I am..."

"Today I am filled with joy as I have learnt a lot and have seen a lot of changes in my life. I am very grateful, and I want to thank my brothers and sisters all over the world for the support that they have sent so that we have been able to have this programme."

THINK

Ladi called her son Emmanuel. Emmanuel means 'God with us'. Some have paraphrased it as 'God to the rescue'. What does 'rescue' mean for women and girls like Ladi?

WHAT CAN I DO?

Use the *Portraits and Prayer* guide to pray for Ladi this week. Remember especially all those Christians in internally displaced people camps who are marginalised and abused, even in places where they should be safe.

Go to www.opendoorsuk.org/seechange to find out how you can help trauma survivors like Ladi.



LADI

Self-portrait

LADI



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CHARITY

Portrait by Hannah Rose Thomas

See. CHARITY Part 1

Portrait by Hannah Rose Thomas

Charity was abducted from her village by Boko Haram militants and held captive for three years. Even though she was already married, she was forcibly married to someone else because she was a Christian – an 'infidel'.

She became pregnant and gave birth to a baby girl called Rahila.

Eventually she was freed by the Nigerian military. But when she and Rahila came home, Charity's trauma continued. Charity now lives in camp for internally displaced people (IDPs), but life is hard. Her real husband beat her and rejected baby Rahila.

SKILLS FOR LIFE

Many Christian mothers around the world are alone. Perhaps they have been widowed, their husband killed for following Jesus, or they may have become a Christian and have been rejected by their families for choosing that path. Open Doors works with local partners to help women with basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as offering employment training so that they can earn a living and gain independence.

PRAY

Creator God,

Thank You for our work. Thank You for the education that we have received and the skills we have. Help us to do all we can to take these gifts to others.

Amen. I see you.



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Charity's portrait ©2018 Hannah Rose Thomas

Change. CHARITY Part 2

Self-portrait by Charity, painted as part of an art therapy workshop run by Open Doors partners

"I've shown my face with tears in my eyes, because I was remembering all of the problems I went through with my husband when I came back...

"I have never held a pen in my life before and it was the first time I have been able to write my name and even draw my face. I want to say thank you to everybody who has been praying for me and for those who have sent support to help us. Thank you."

"The trauma healing has really helped me and encouraged me. When I went back many people saw a difference in me.

"I just want to thank God... there's a change in my husband. He started liking my daughter and has even carried her."

THINK

Signing her painting was the first time Charity had ever written her own name. What difference might it make to her to be able to read and write?

WHAT CAN I DO?

Use the *Portraits and Prayer* guide to pray Charity this week. Pray especially for peace in Nigeria.

Use your literacy skills. Send a letter of encouragement to a persecuted Christian woman. Find out more at www.opendoorsuk.org/write.



CHARITY

Self-portrait



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See. **ESTHER** Part 1

Portrait by Hannah Rose Thomas

Esther was captured by Boko Haram as a teenager and held for three years. The abducted Christians were given a choice: marry or become a slave. Esther chose slavery, but it made no difference. She was eventually forced to marry a Boko Haram fighter.

When the fighter was killed, she managed to escape. Seven months pregnant, she eventually managed to return to her village, but she was taunted and ostracised.

"They mocked me because I was pregnant," she said. Her own grandmother called her names. Heartbreakingly, when her baby was born, they refused to call her by her name, Rebecca. They called the little girl 'Boko', as if, somehow, Esther and her little girl were to blame.

FORCED MARRIAGE

Marriage is a gift from God, but in some places it has been weaponised. Christian girls are abducted and forced into marriage. For example, an estimated 700 Pakistani Christian girls and women are abducted each year and forcefully converted and married to Muslim men.

PRAY

Lord of all love,

I pray for all those women and children who have been stigmatised through no fault of their own. Let them know that they are loved. Help their family to protect them and welcome them back.

Amen. I see you.



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Esther's portrait ©2018 Hannah Rose Thomas

Change. **ESTHER** Part 2

Self-portrait by Esther, painted as part of an art therapy workshop run by Open Doors partners

"I want people to know that women here need trauma help because of the things that have happened. And those with resources can give the support so that many more women may be helped.

"Before I came for the programme, if my daughter was called 'Boko Haram baby' I fought with a lot of people and it hurt. But now, even if they call her that, I don't feel it because I know that's not who my baby is. I know God loves me and I cannot describe all the good things He has done for me. God loves me so much, I think I am the one God loves most in the world... All I can say is, 'May God bless you and thank you so much.'"

THINK

"God loves me so much, I think I am the one God loves most in the world." What do you think enables Esther to say this after all that she has gone through?

WHAT CAN I DO?

Many supporters sent messages to Esther including the UK's Foreign Secretary. You can see videos of Esther and baby Rebecca on www.opendoorsuk.org/seechange

Use the *Portraits and Prayer* guide to pray for Esther and for baby Rebecca this week. Remember all those children born as a result of rape or forced marriage. They are precious and made in the image of God.



ESTHER

Self-portrait



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