

# ART OF PERSECUTION WORKSHOP →



**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted Christians worldwide

[www.theartofpersecution.com](http://www.theartofpersecution.com)

Registered Charity No. 260600

## Main Aims:

- To find out what the Bible says about persecution.
- To learn about the persecution of Christians today.
- To consider what our response should be.

**Skill Level:** This workshop is aimed to be usable by a teacher/youth leader working with either children or adults, and can be adapted accordingly. Although the materials are fairly straightforward and easy to manage, it is hoped that people will take the projects as far as time and their skill level will allow. It is hoped that those who are not specialist art teachers will feel comfortable leading such a workshop.

## Method:

The workshop examples here are for 2D and 3D artwork and photography, but the discussion and response sections would be just as useful for people working in poetry, song or video etc.

**Texts:** Verses on Persecution (at end of the workshops) and four case studies entitled Inspiration (on the Art of Persecution website [www.theartofpersecution.com](http://www.theartofpersecution.com)).

## Resources - please select those relevant.

Sugar/cartridge paper  
Different textured paper  
Strips of cloth  
Card  
Pastels/chalks  
Pencils  
Paint  
Brushes  
String/materials for binding  
Pliers & Wire

Scissors, PVA glue  
Masking Tape  
Access to sink or 2 buckets of water  
Rope & Netting  
Newspapers & Magazines  
Copies of the **Bible Texts**  
Copies of the **Definitions** page  
Copies of the **4 Inspiration** Stories  
Camera  
Video Camera

## Artists and Visual References:

*It might be useful to be selective on the images below depending on the age group*

- Hieronymus Bosch - Christ carrying the cross \*
- Hieronymus Bosch - Christ crowned with thorns \*
- Pablo Picasso - Guernica \*
- Max Beckmann - The Night \*
- Pictures/Sculptures of martyrs in medieval & Renaissance painting
- \* These images can be found on [www.Google.co.uk](http://www.Google.co.uk) in Images.
- News stories (eg. the murder of a nun in Somalia in September 2006)
- Other reference material from the Open Doors website
- Barbed wire, sharp objects, weapons, saws etc
- Pictures of mouths with different expressions
- Statistical information about persecution
- Fragmented images

## ACTIVITY

### Discussion - 10 mins

Give everyone a copy of the texts on persecution from a modern version of the Bible - see below - and one of the four contemporary stories of persecuted believers ([www.theartofpersecution.com](http://www.theartofpersecution.com) under Inspiration). Read the text, asking that the pupils make notes of things that strike them as you are reading. As you read, pause and linger over certain words or groups of words so that people focus and explore their meaning.

Brainstorm ideas from the text - key words, phrases, colours/smells, significant actions, gut feelings, atmosphere. Get each person to write notes on their ideas.

Consider the following discussion points:

- Why might a person be persecuted?
- What makes people so angry or violent to Christians?
- How does one naturally respond?
- How should a Christian respond?

Now focus more specifically on the story with the following discussion points:

- What kind of people are the persecutors?
- Why are the Christians being targeted?
- How is the Christians response different from how others would behave?
- Why do you think it has been said, "Martyrdom is the seed of the Church?"

### Art Response - 5 mins

What materials, colours, words and images could be used to represent this? Make some abstract patterns and scribbles that could reflect each of these attitudes and responses:

- The anger and hatred of those who are persecuting.
- The attitude of people watching from the side.
- The response of Christians being attacked (how do they feel inside / how Christ enables them to feel inside.

### Developments - 25 - 40 mins

Select one of the following four workshop ideas.

Consider the work of the artists and the visual stimuli suggested in Artists and Visual References (above) to get ideas to show to the group.

#### Workshop 1 - Fragmentation image

Make 3 separate pictures or symbols to represent the persecutors, the Christians suffering, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tear each of them up into several strips and re-arrange them together on one page so that they overlap and interlace. Using the ideas generated in the discussion stage, stick them down in ways that suggest aggression/hatred/love /respect etc between the different people. (Remember Jesus died for the persecutors as much as he died for the believers.) Try to draw out the different ways the three groups view the situation.

Draw over and even write onto the resulting collage to integrate the image and show your personal response to the issues.

#### Workshop 2 - Word Puzzle

Make a list of all the words relating to persecution mentioned in the Bible texts, Definitions and the Inspiration stories. Divide the words into categories. See if you can find any positive words that relate to the stories.

Take some newspaper/magazine pictures of people, or draw your own, to represent the persecuted Church throughout the world.

Now draw a grid over the picture of the people and then place the words from the list into the grid like a crossword or word search puzzle. If you use any positive words, you might write them backwards or upside down as a way of showing how they are forgotten or well hidden in the midst of suffering. (e.g. "Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse." Romans 12/14)

### **Workshop 3 - Model**

Make some kind of cage or container to symbolise different kinds of restraint, oppression or imprisonment. Make shapes to symbolise figures and place them within the container.

Make sharp pointed objects to place around or into the container to show threats to the figures. These might be covered with symbols or words.

Consider how you might represent God's interest in the situation, his concern for the Christians, his love for the persecutors, his promise of the kingdom of God for "those who are persecuted because of righteousness" Matthew 5/10.

### **Workshop 4 - Photographic Stories or Video Short**

Use the people in the group to act out and tell a story about persecution that addresses one of the Bible passages, or one of the four Inspiration reports, or another that you know of.

*As a warm-up take the list of the words about persecution and ask the group to take up a body posture or gesture that reflects ten of those words. This itself could be developed into a series of photos in its own right.*

Get them to discuss the theme in detail, and pick out 4 - 6 key visual moments that express the issues. Get them to act them out as still moments for a standard photograph or make short scenes for a video. Think carefully about the background, furniture, clothing, posture, facial expressions, and try to create symbolic power rather than realism. Simplified colour, plain backgrounds and careful editing are likely to improve the images. See if you can make 4 - 6 still photos that together describe an event that relates to the theme you have chosen. Test them out on others who know nothing of the project and see what they think.

*Be aware that younger groups of kids will take this as an excuse to muck about rather than engage with the issues at the heart of the project. For older children or adults, putting themselves in the position of the persecuted may be quite significant.*

### **Show and Tell - 5 mins (all workshops)**

Ask the group to talk about what they have made and how the project has affected them. Encourage the group to constructively comment on each other's representation of the issues, as well as suggesting ways to develop them further.

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## **BIBLE VERSES**

- Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. (Matthew 5/10-11)
- But I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your father in heaven. (Matthew 5/44)
- If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. (John 15/20b)
- While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit'. Then he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them'. When he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7/59-60)
- Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. (Romans 12/14)
- On the contrary: if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12/20-21)
- Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawn in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and ill-treated - the world was not worthy of them. (Hebrews 11/36-38b)
- In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3/12)

# DEFINITIONS

## Dictionary - Chambers 21st Century

### Art noun

- 1a the creation of works of beauty, especially visual ones;
- 1b such creations thought of collectively.
- 2 human skill and work as opposed to nature.
- 3 a skill, especially one gained through practice.
- 4 *colloquial* cunning schemes.

### Persecution noun

- 1 the act of ill-treating, oppressing, tormenting, or putting to death (a person or people), especially on the grounds of their religious or political beliefs.
  - 2 harassment, pestering or bothering someone continually.
- From Latin *persequi*, *persecutus* to pursue or ill-treat.

## Examples

### The Art of Persecution may take the form of:

- verbal abuse, threats, insults
- prejudice, intolerance, humiliation, harassment
- misrepresentation & vilification in the newspapers or TV
- job discrimination, refusal of promotion, refusal of accommodation, corruption
- violence, cruelty, beatings by family
- attacks by other communities
- beatings from the government or the police
- kidnapping, imprisonment
- separation, starvation
- confiscation of property, destruction of property, arson
- rape & torture
- murder, execution, assassination
- denial of rights, denial of history
- *and is being constantly refined even as you read these words.*