



# White Flour

Sunday School Curriculum

## OPENING MIXER

*White Flour* is intended to be a conversation starter rather than a conversation ender. As the clowns in the story demonstrate, sometimes a bit of silliness is helpful in making good things happen, including good conversations. This mixer may help to get people talking, encourage interaction and openness, and lighten the mood, which will set the right tone to explore the story told in *White Flour*.

## FORTUNATELY... UNFORTUNATELY...

- Arrange chairs in a circle, one for each participant
- Alternating around the circle, assign each player to be a “Fortunately,” or an “Unfortunately.” The player on your immediate right should be a “Fortunately.”
- Once each player knows his/her role, begin an improvised story that stops when something terrible is about to happen.

*Example: “One day I was walking down the road when an enormous tiger jumped out of the bushes. It was clear the beast was angry and hungry. I covered my eyes and the beast leapt!”*

- Point to the teller on your right to continue the tale with the word “Fortunately...”

*Example: “Fortunately, a bolt of lightning came down from the sky and burned the tiger to a crisp.”*

- Motion to the next teller to continue the tale with the word “Unfortunately...”

*Example: “Unfortunately, the lightning set the woods on fire and I had to run for my life.”*

- Continue around the circle until everyone has added a plot twist. If the group is small, you may want to go around the circle twice.

## LEADER’S NOTE

This game is designed to get people talking and laughing, and also to demonstrate the group’s own creativity. It almost inevitably results in wildly fantastic stories, as people in the group begin to top each other. Encourage that!

After you complete the game, note that no one could have guessed where the story would go simply by hearing the opening line. Creativity is something nearly everyone brings in abundant supply. It may also be useful to note that it took the whole group to tell the story it told. No one person in the group could have done it. Nonviolent action usually works best when it is undertaken in community and solidarity, and it requires creativity.

## “WHITE FLOUR”



You will need at least one copy of *White Flour* by David LaMotte for each small group.

Depending on the size of your group, you may want to divide your group into smaller groups. Give each group a copy of *White Flour* by David LaMotte.

Read the book out loud as a small group. You can take turns, reading one page at a time, and passing the book around. Be sure each reader shows the illustrations to the rest of the group before turning the page.

When you're finished, read the section at the end, "What Really Happened," out loud.

### UNPACKING THE STORY:

*The following discussion questions may be useful in your discussion of the story:*

1. Who are the characters in this book?
2. How would you describe each character? Are they different? How?
3. What are some different ways that the clowns could have responded to the figures in hoods?
4. How do the figures in hoods respond to the clowns? How do you imagine the clowns' actions might have made them feel?
5. Do the clowns make fun of the people in robes, or do they only make fun of their ideas? Does this matter? What options does each approach leave available for the hooded figures?
6. Have you ever seen anyone being treated by a group in a way that made you feel uncomfortable? What did you do?

## JESUS, BULLYING, AND HUMOR

Have someone open their Bible and read Matthew 5: 38-39 out loud:

***‘You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also.’***

-Matthew 5:38-39

New Revised Standard Version

### TAKE TURNS READING THE FOLLOWING OUT LOUD AS A GROUP:

When Christians read this Bible verse, they often think that Jesus is telling us it’s okay to let bullies walk all over you. This may sound very confusing.

Turn the other cheek? Is that really good advice? How does that change anything?

As a matter of fact, when Jesus told his followers to turn the other cheek also, he was actually suggesting something kind of sneaky. When Jesus says, “Do not resist an evildoer,” the original Greek New Testament used a very special Greek word for “resist,” called *antistenein* (pronounced an-TISS-ten-nye).

This word was often used by the military when they talked about aggressive retaliation—resisting violence with more violence.

When Jesus tells his followers NOT to do this, suddenly the story took on a very different meaning. Jesus is not saying let bullies walk all over you. Jesus is saying, “Do not respond to violence with more violence.” Greek-speaking readers of the Bible would have seen this word in Jesus’ speech and understood what this meant right away, but sometimes this gets lost in our English translation.

Speaking of different meanings, why do you think Jesus make a point to say the right cheek? Why not the left cheek? What’s so important about the right cheek?

In Jesus’ neighborhood, people were generally right-handed. The left hand back then was only used for “unclean tasks,” and sometimes people would receive penalties for even gesturing with the left hand! So the only way to strike someone’s right cheek (since Jesus is specifying) with your right hand would have been to use a backhanded slap.

This is a demeaning insult, rather than a fist-fight with an equal. It would have been meant to embarrass, shame or humiliate someone, not to actually hurt them. It was completely unacceptable in that time and culture, and would have resulted in a fine that was one hundred times the fine imposed for punching a peer with your fist (though there were no fines at all for backhanding a slave).

## CONTINUE READING THE FOLLOWING OUT LOUD AS A GROUP:

So, let's think about this for a minute. If someone slaps you with the back of the only hand they're allowed to use, turning the other cheek suddenly makes it very difficult to slap them again, doesn't it?

Suddenly, the oppressor is unable to slap you anymore. You've robbed them of their power, and you've barely even done anything! By turning the other cheek, the person being slapped has said, "Oh, are you trying to humiliate me? It didn't work. I'm a human being just like you. It doesn't matter if you're richer than me, stronger than me, of a higher status than me – I'm a human being, and you can't take that away from me. I deny you the power demean me!"

Suddenly, the bully is in a very sticky situation. Unless they are extremely flexible or willing to pay a very large fine, the oppressor would have to give up and admit that they had lost the fight...and the other person hasn't even done anything!

All they did was turn their head!

Jesus' followers could have probably gotten away with this sneaky little trick only once, but by that point, the point would have already been made. A message has been sent. "I am your equal, and you cannot demean me!"

Jesus is not telling His followers to let bullies walk over you, but Jesus makes it very clear that violence is also not the answer. Jesus tells His followers to try something else instead - to use their brains, not their fists. To be creative, sneaky, and irreverent! Jesus uses *creativity and humor* to **resist** violence without actually resorting to violence in return.

In God's world, creativity, imagination, ideas, and non-violent resistance are much more powerful than exchanging blows or bringing physical harm to our neighbor – even when the neighbor happens to be our enemy.

If we read just four verses later in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus tells His followers, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your [God] in heaven; for [God] makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous." (Matthew 5: 43-45)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The insights and information in this lesson plan are largely drawn from the work of Dr. Walter Wink, former Professor of Biblical Interpretation at Auburn Theological Seminary in New York City. For more insights from Dr. Wink on this text and other Gospel examples of creativity and humor as nonviolent resistance, please read his essay, "Beyond Just War and Pacifism: Jesus' Nonviolent Way" at [http://www.cres.org/star/\\_wink.htm](http://www.cres.org/star/_wink.htm), his book *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way* (<http://www.fortresspress.com>), or visit his website at <http://www.WalterWink.com> to explore his other work.*

## ACT IT OUT!



It's time to do a skit!

As a small group, imagine one specific way that people are oppressed today (you might suggest some examples such as bullying, gossip, violence, etc.). As a group, come up with a skit that demonstrates a creative, subversive, or even funny way that someone might resist that kind of oppression today without using any kind of violence.

Take ten or fifteen minutes to do this. Come up with the skit, assign parts, and maybe even run through it to practice once or twice.

Then have each group take turns performing their skit for the rest of the group.

## CLOSING PRAYER



**Leader:** From where we are, to where you call us to be,

*All: Jesus, Lead us on.*

**Leader:** From the differences that we divide us to a community that celebrates differences in our neighbors,

*All: Jesus, Lead us on.*

**Leader:** From the temptation to retaliate against our enemies, to the Christ's celebration of creativity, imagination, and the non-violent way,

*All: Jesus, lead us on.*

**Leader:** From hatred that excludes to laughter that invites,

*All: Jesus, lead us on.*

**Leader:** From demeaning people to challenging demeaning ideas,

*All: Jesus, lead us on.*

**Leader:** From fear to courage,

*All: Jesus, lead us on.*

**Leader:** From the love of power to the power of love,

*All: Jesus, lead us on.*

**Leader:** To challenge the violent culture of this world until it resembles the world that God calls us to,

*All: Jesus, Lead us on.*

**Leader:** Because we are created in the image of God, because we are God's family, because we are called to celebrate all that is rich with diversity, color, craziness and love.

*All: Jesus, Lead us on.*

# What Really Happened

On May 26, 2007 members of a white supremacist groups went to Knoxville, Tennessee to hold a rally in a public park there. They held signs that insulted not only African-Americans, but Jews as well. One sign had a picture of a noose, with the words “insert neck here” written beside it. As is usually the case at such racist rallies, the counter-protesters outnumbered the racists by far. In this case, though, they didn’t try to shout them down. They didn’t meet anger with more anger. Rather, the local activists met hatred with humor. The Coup Clutz Clowns had prepared carefully for the day, rehearsed, and brought plenty of props and costumes. All of the ‘misunderstandings’ that the clowns in the poem chant were actually part of that day’s shenanigans, and there were others, too.

I took some artistic license in the poem in at least a couple of ways—notably, the supremacists were not wearing robes and were not only Klansmen, but Neo-Nazis as well. Klan robes are visual shorthand to represent those beliefs and values, though, and it seemed like the best vehicle to tell the story.

Beyond mere Facts, though, there is Truth in this story, and I’m happy to share it with you. That Truth, it seems to me, is that there are more than two ways to respond to aggression. ‘Fight or flight’ responses are natural. It is understandable to think they are the only two options. The best option, though, is often a ‘third way.’ A third way must be creative enough to find ways to disarm hatred without either retreating or yielding to aggression and hatred ourselves. If we can do this, we often find that unpredictable positive outcomes suddenly become possible.

In this case, the racist group did not get what they wanted. No one got worked up about their threats and machismo. The counter-protesters simply refused to take such foolishness seriously. The hate group had reserved the square for several hours that day, but they gave up and left an hour and a half early, apparently not knowing how to respond. It is true that the only arrest that day was of one of the leaders of the white supremacists, who rushed at the clowns. It is also true that the police offered the clowns an escort after the Klan and Neo-Nazis left.

I wouldn’t suggest that clown actions are always the way to respond to such events, though it worked that day. What is needed is creativity, solidarity and a refusal to become that which we abhor. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

Of all the exciting things that have happened to this book and because of it, there is one that stands out. A few months after *White Flour* was released, another white supremacist march very similar to the one in Knoxville took place in Charlotte, North Carolina. A different group of clowns showed up this time, and they, too, were successful in shifting the mood of the event, countering hatred with humor. Their real-life strategies were inspired by *White Flour*. Here’s to those who march on,

*David LaMotte*



## About the Curriculum Writer

This curriculum was written by Marc van Bulck. Marc has served as the Director of Youth Ministries at First Presbyterian Church, Bentonville, Arkansas and Riverside Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, FL. Some of his favorite hobbies include writing, watching movies, nerding out about Jim Henson, and getting coffee with his friends. He is also a magician. For more information, please feel free to e-mail him at: [Marcel.van.Bulck@gmail.com](mailto:Marcel.van.Bulck@gmail.com).



## About the Author

David LaMotte is a dad, husband, peace activist, poet, shutterbug and very bad racquetball player. He makes his living as a singer/songwriter and a public speaker, sometimes at the same time. He has led workshops, keynoted and performed well over 2000 concerts on four continents, and put out ten CDs over the last twenty years. He is also a Rotary World Peace Fellow with a masters in International Studies, Peace and Conflict Resolution from the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia and a B.A. in Psychology from James Madison University. For hobbies, he is the co-founder and unpaid director of PEG Partners, a small non-profit that supports schools and libraries in Guatemala, and the Clerk (chair) of the AFSC Nobel Peace Prize Nominating Committee, which chooses a nominee to put forward each year on behalf of Quakers, who were awarded the Prize in 1947.

*White Flour* is his second children's book. *S.S. Bathtub*, based on his award-winning song by the same name and illustrated by Carrie Patterson, is a rhyming book for younger children. He is currently working on a non-fiction book for adults, tentatively titled *Worldchanging 101: Challenging the Myth of Powerlessness*, which is also a frequent topic for his talks. He has lived in Florida, Virginia, North Carolina, France, Australia and India, but he likes everywhere else, too. Currently, he lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, with his wife and their four-year-old son.

David is available for classroom visits and school assemblies, or, as a cheaper alternative, can Skype into classrooms for a talk on either Creative Writing, Practical Dream Following, or *Worldchanging 101*, along with question and answer sessions. For more information or to get in touch, visit [davidlamotte.com](http://davidlamotte.com) or [whiteflourbook.com](http://whiteflourbook.com).



## About the Illustrator

As a child Jenn Hales spent her time reading books and examining bumble-bees in the front yard. Her family didn't have a tv, so she drew the creatures she saw in nature and in her imagination. Later, Jenn moved to Ohio where she graduated from the University of Cincinnati with a degree in Industrial Design. She's worked as a toy designer, a footwear designer, a design researcher, and a welder at SAS institute. Nowadays, Jenn lives in Raleigh, NC and works as a full time illustrator and artist. When she's not painting she spends her time with her partner Graymon and her dog Totoro. You can find more about Jenn Hales and her work at [www.jennhales.com](http://www.jennhales.com)

*There is a free video version of White Flour available at [www.whiteflourbook.com](http://www.whiteflourbook.com), as well as bulk order book purchase deals for teachers and information regarding how you could have David LaMotte as a guest in your Sunday school class, either in person or via video link.*

For more information, please visit [whiteflourbook.com](http://whiteflourbook.com)  
or call Lower Dryad Music at (919) 923-8494.