



OVERVIEW SECTION

How to Read This Lesson Plan

The **Overview Section** is the foundation of this lesson plan. The questions and activities for the class that you will be teaching on Sunday morning have been based (sometimes loosely) upon what you read in this section. The **Overview Section** is composed of five components (each component is underlined in the lesson plan):

How to Read This Lesson Plan (defines all components of the lesson plan)

Purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation (a reminder of why we do this)

Scripture(s) for the Session (a reminder that the scripture is to be read in every class)

Key Verses & Theology (background for teachers to ponder)

Themes to Focus on from the Scripture (the ideas that the session's lessons are based on)

The actual lesson is found in the second section, **The Sunday Morning Experience Section**. Think of this section as the step-by-step instruction guide to your Sunday morning teaching experience. There are four components to this section (again, each component is underlined in the actual lesson plan):

Preparation (including supplies needed)

Classroom Statement (a brief explanation of what will be taught/happening in the classroom)

Step-by-step process of the lesson (including the scripture to be read)

Suggested variations for age groups (Self-explanatory but not always applicable)

We encourage you to read the rest of this **Overview Section** before reading the **Sunday Morning Experience Section**.

Purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation:

The purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation is, with God's help and in community, to hear and interact with the stories of our faith tradition, to pray, worship and play together, and to equip and support the building of relationships with God and with each other.

Scripture(s) for the Session: John 3:1-8; 16-17

Please READ this aloud in every class you teach. The actual words to the scripture can be found in **The Sunday Morning Experience Section: Step-by-Step process of the lesson**. When reading to the class, please read it from the lesson plan (not an actual Bible) as the wording of the scripture has been modified to help clarify some language issues.

Key Verses & Theology: These are provided to help the teachers think about and build a framework for understanding the story to help in answering some of the questions that the students might raise in class.

1 Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2 He came to Jesus by night. The Pharisees were the established religious and cultural leaders of Israel. The Israelites placed a great amount of prestige on the Pharisees. However, Jesus teachings often painted the Pharisees in a bad light. Jesus often pointed out how the Pharisees cared more for their own prestige than they cared about helping the people pay attention to and experience God. Jesus, by paying attention to God, performing miracles and encouraging the people to pay attention to God, was stealing the Pharisee's thunder (not on purpose – that's just how it works. When we pay attention to and are obedient to God and God's way, we shine brighter than those walking their own path). This is why Nicodemus, a Pharisee, comes to Jesus *at night*. Nicodemus does *not* want to be seen with Jesus. If he was seen with Jesus, fellow Pharisees would reprimand him and Nicodemus would lose prestige and standing. So even though Nicodemus is curious about Jesus, he's not curious enough to risk his image with outright contact with Jesus. And so this clandestine meeting takes place.

3 Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus, who seems to be purposely obtuse in his response to Jesus' statement says, "You can't re-enter your mother's womb and be born again!" Jesus, though, isn't talking biologically. He's talking about perspective. As long as Nicodemus' perspective is one based on prestige, image, power and control, then he is not going to be able to see God's kingdom or be able to receive, in any large measure, the Holy Spirit. Jesus is telling Nicodemus that in order to shift one's perspective so radically, one must start over. Basically, Jesus is telling Nicodemus that if Nicodemus really wants to understand, then he has to throw the baby out with the bathwater and begin his life again. And if Nicodemus does begin again, he must submit to the ways of God's instead of to the ways of humans.

8 You know well enough how the wind blows this way and that. You hear it rustling through the trees, but you have no idea where it comes from or where it's headed next. That's the way it is with everyone 'born from above' by the wind of God, the Spirit of God." Jesus is telling Nicodemus in this verse that when you are born again you will not know or even understand why you are to do certain things. That you will be directed by God in a fashion that is similar to the wind. For an image-obsessed person like Nicodemus, who likes to have all his ducks in a row, this is an unfathomable way of life. Which is why he'd have to completely let go of his current life and start over in order to see and live God's way. He'd have to have new priorities and not try to hold the position he now has in life. Just like the disciples gave up their way of life when Jesus called them to follow, so would Nicodemus have to give up his way of life to the wind, to the Spirit of God.

Themes to Focus on from the Scripture: Themes are provided to help teachers understand the teaching of the *session* (not necessarily the class). Sometimes an activity in one class may not match up with any of the themes.

Image: Nicodemus is worried what others will say about him. So he hides his actions from the world. He does not want to be seen talking to Jesus. And so what does Jesus talk about? He talks to Nicodemus about what you have to do in order to see the Kingdom of God. And part of what Jesus

says is that Nicodemus has to stop caring about what others think of him because God will be sending him one way and then the next, like how the wind blows a leaf. And if Nicodemus cares too much about what he looks like, then he will not be able to be obedient to God's call. Being your own man/woman and being a child of God are not compatible identities.

Wind: The Hebrew word for wind, spirit and breath is the same word (*ruach*). So when Jesus says wind, he's also saying the word Spirit. Jesus is pointing out that we can't make plans based on the wind. And the same is true for the Spirit. If we have plans, the wind will mess those plans up (think of a picnic on a windy day, for example). If we don't want our plans messed up (and we probably don't since that's why we made plans in the first place), then we'll be resistant to where the wind/Spirit would be leading us. In order to get rid of all our plans and expectations, we'd have to start our living all over again, and in doing so, base our decisions on a whole new set of understandings.

Saved/Salvation: All this talk of starting life again, being reborn, letting the Spirit guide us instead of our plans can sound pretty scary as well as wacky, crazy and irresponsible. Nicodemus probably had similar thoughts. This is why Jesus tells him what has become the famous verse of "For God so loved the world that he sent his only son, not to condemn the world, but to save it." Even though being reborn (once we consider what it consists of) sounds initially destructive, Jesus is reminding Nicodemus that this whole starting over thing is the better way. And, that this better way of being reborn and then living God's Way will save everyone from the consequences of our current ways of living. This can be a hard teaching. Seeing what we need to be saved from helps us to receive this difficult lesson. We never hear if Nicodemus starts over or not, but we do see this rebirth Jesus describes happen later, with another Pharisee named Paul.



THE SUNDAY MORNING EXPERIENCE SECTION

Preparation

- Print out this lesson plan and bring it with you on the Sunday Mornings you are teaching
- Arrive at pre-arranged time to join other teachers, shepherds and staff for an opening prayer.
- Materials needed: 30 sheets of brightly colored 8 1/2" x 11" typing paper; thirty 8" bamboo barbecue/shishkabab sticks; 2 or 3 rolls of party streamers; 1 roll of 1/2" wide masking tape or any type of plastic tape; 1 roll of string. (At least 300' = 10 feet ea. for 30 students.); 30 pieces of 1"x 3" cardboard on which to wind the string; Scissors; at least 1 hole punch.

Classroom Statement

This Arts and Crafts class consists of reading the story of Nicodemus and Jesus to the students and then making a kite that acts as a reminder of how we are to let the Holy Spirit move us, like the wind moves a leaf or a kite.

Step-by-Step Process of Lesson

Shepherd comes in with students

SHEPHERD ASKS "Question of the Day."

INTRODUCE yourself

Hi, my name is ____ and I want you call me (tell the students how they may address you).

PRAY Short and simple is perfect. For example:

God, thank you for this day and for each other. We need your help. Help us to learn about you this day. Amen.

TELL

- The scripture story we're going to hear today is a conversation between Jesus and a man named Nicodemus.
- Jesus talks some about God's Holy Spirit and being "born from above."
- Listen for what Jesus says the Holy Spirit acts like.

READ John 3:1-8; 16-17 (mixture of NRSV and the Message)

1 There was a man named Nicodemus, who was a Pharisee and prominent leader among the Jews. 2 Late one night he visited Jesus and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from

God; for no one can do these things that you do if they are separated from the presence of God." 3 Jesus said, "You're absolutely right. Take it from me: Unless a person is born from above, it's not possible to see what I'm pointing to - to God's kingdom." 4 "How can anyone," said Nicodemus, "be born who has already been born and grown up? What are you saying with this 'born-from-above' talk?" 5 Jesus answered, "You're not listening. So I'll say it another way, 6 'No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of the Holy Spirit.' 7 Do not be shocked that I said to you, "You must be born from above.' 8 If you choose to live God's way, then you must surrender to God's Holy Spirit that is like the wind. And you must let it move you where it chooses."

16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have life forever. 17 "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

ASK (answers in parentheses)

- What does Jesus say the Holy Spirit is like? (the wind)
- And what does Jesus tell Nicodemus he needs to let the Holy Spirit do? (move him where it chooses)

TELL

- At the start of the story, we learn that Nicodemus is a Pharisee.
- It took Nicodemus a LOT of hard work and focus to become a Pharisee.
- Jesus is telling Nicodemus that Nicodemus focused on the wrong thing in his life by becoming a Pharisee.
- Jesus is then telling Nicodemus that if Nicodemus wants to heal and teach like Jesus, then Nicodemus needs to start living his life in a completely different way by focusing on God instead of focusing on being a Pharisee. This is what Jesus means when he says, "You must be born from above."

TRANSITION TO ACTIVITY

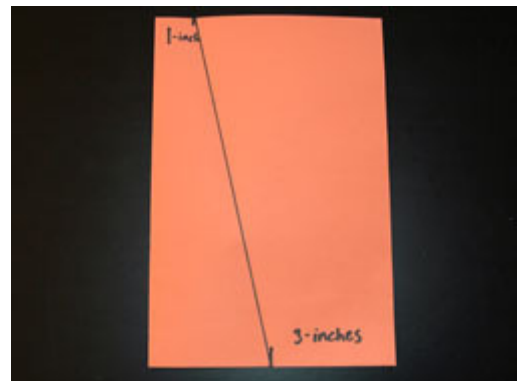
- I need us to pretend now for a moment. Pretend you are a leaf.
- Now pretend that the wind is blowing.
- As a leaf, what are you doing in the wind? (being moved around)
- Now let's say, as a leaf, you want to go somewhere opposite of where the wind is moving you. How would you move against the wind? (very slowly; you wouldn't; other ideas?)
- Let's say you COULD move against the wind as a leaf. When you did move against the wind, how might the wind have an effect on you?
 - Maybe you might tear in a couple of places?
- This is what Nicodemus was doing. By paying attention to what he wanted, instead of what God wanted him to do, Nicodemus was like a leaf moving against the wind. And that's why he couldn't teach or heal like Jesus did.
- We're going to make a kite in class today as a reminder that when we pay attention to God and follow what God tells us to do, then we will soar up high.
- Here's how we make the kite...

EXPLAIN/DO Kite Craft

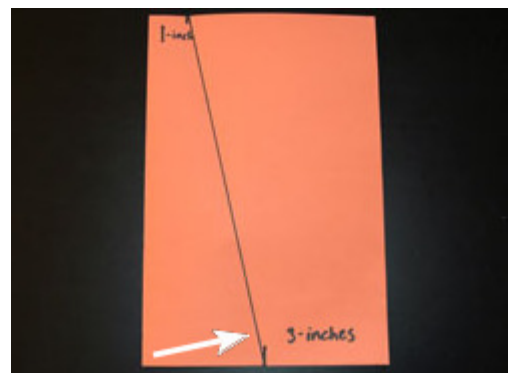
1. Take the 8 ½ x 11 paper and fold it in half to 8 ½ x 5 ½ (fold the paper so it'll be like a hamburger bun, not a hot dog bun)
2. Using the ruler, measure one inch in from the top left corner of the paper and make a mark. (see pic) ----->



3. Next, make another mark three inches in from the bottom right corner of the paper. Use the ruler to draw a straight line between the two marks. (see pic) ----->



4. Next, move the fold (on the left-hand side) so that it rests/matches up with the diagonal line, then fold. -->



5. Now open the paper...it'll look like this ----->



6. Now, place tape firmly along the fold (No stick is needed yet because the fold stiffens the paper and acts like a spine.)



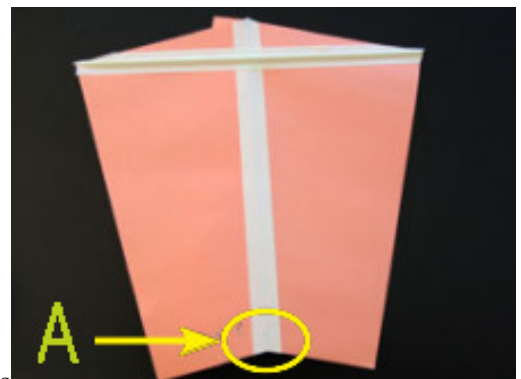
7. Now, lay the wooden skewer down perpendicular to the masking tape. The ends of the skewer should meet the corners of the kite.



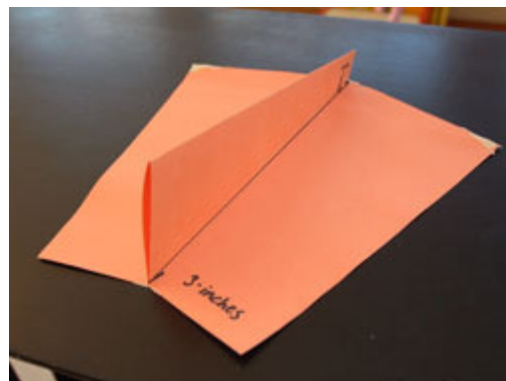
8. cover the entire skewer with masking tape to secure it



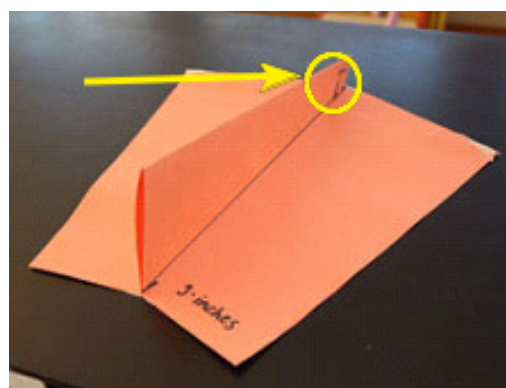
9. Cut a tail from streamers and tape it to the bottom of the kite (at point A).



10. Flip the kite over and move/fold the rudder back and forth until it stands up straight.



11. Using the hole punch, punch a hole in the top of the rudder about ½ inch below where the wooden skewer crosses the masking tape line.
 - If there's time, reinforce the hole with some masking tape to make it strong.



12. Take a 10 foot segment of string and tie one end securely through the hole. Take the other end of the string and wrap it around one of the 30 pieces of 1"x 3" cardboard
13. Flip back over and write on the kite, "Be Born from Above!" or "The breath of God lifts us up!"
14. Then decorate (for about five minutes)
15. That's it. You're done!

TELL

- Remember that just as the wind moves the kite, so can God's spirit move us.
- So when you fly your kite remember that it is the wind of God who lifts us up.

CLEAN UP

Suggested Variations for age groups

The youngest class will have some problems measuring and folding. You might want to pre-fold a few for that day.

Instructions modified from <http://www.allfreecrafts.com/kids/paper-kites.shtml>