



A Workshop Rotation Model Lesson Plan from rfour.org

Born from Above (Nicodemus) | John 3:1-8; 16-17

Season 2.Session 4: Arts & Crafts, Science, Storytelling

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. However, feel free to print out the scripture and place it IN a Bible, so that there is a visual connection between the Bible and the story.

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.



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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.
- Supplies Needed: Two empty 12 oz soda cans (depending on the surface of table, two tennis balls might work better than two soda cans); a number of regular-sized straws (at least three per class); large can (a soup or coffee can works just fine – doesn't need to be emptied or opened); tea light candle; lighter; hair dryer; ping pong ball; WindTube from www.teachersource.com (if windtube is not available, a large-size garbage bag – 30 gallons or more – works fine); one copy per student of roto-copter pattern (can be found at end of this lesson plan); paper clips; scissors; cereal bowl; newspaper (with circle drawn on it that's about 2 feet in diameter); a non-folding chair to stand on

Classroom Statement

This Science class consists of reading the story of Nicodemus and Jesus to the students and then uses 5 wind experiments as a way to demonstrate similarities that the wind and God's Holy Spirit share.

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 being “born from above” and about the Holy Spirit.
- 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 did Jesus say the Holy Spirit acts like? (the wind)
- Do you by any chance know what the Hebrew word for wind is? (Ruach. Pronounced “RUU-awk” Have the class say it with you)
- Do you by any chance know what the Hebrew word for breath is? (same thing: Ruach)
- Do you by any chance know what the Hebrew word for Spirit is? (again, same thing: Ruach)
- Does the idea of letting the wind blow you around sound at all scary to you? Like if it was a windy day, then you might never get home?

TELL

- For those of us who do think the wind blowing us around is a scary thing, that’s why Jesus ends with the last two verses: To let Nicodemus (and the rest of us) know that God’s Holy Spirit will not be destructive to him, me, you or the world. Jesus is telling Nicodemus that God’s Holy Spirit is a gift of love meant to save the world, not destroy it.
- One thing that helps us be less afraid of something is to learn about it.
- Since both Jesus and the Hebrew language think the wind and God’s Holy Spirit share traits, let’s do some wind demonstrations and experiments to compare how the wind is like God’s Holy Spirit.

EXPLAIN First Experiment

- I am holding two empty soda cans (or two tennis balls).
- I am putting them on this table top, which is a smooth and level surface.
- What do you think will happen if I take this straw and blow gently between the two cans. What will the cans do?
- Can I have a volunteer? (choose volunteer)

- Don't blow so hard that the cans tip over and remember to blow between the cans
- [when doing this experiment, the wind needs to pass/catch on the curvature of the cans/tennis balls. The lowered air pressure (the more air moves the less pressure it has) "pulls" the curved items in, not out].
- [When this experiment is done, the cans should come together.]

TELL

- This surprising result is because faster moving air exerts less pressure than slower moving air . Thus, the air pressure is greater on the far side of the cans (where the air is moving slower) so they are pushed together when air moves by them.
- God's Holy Spirit is like the wind because when two or more people are paying attention to God, then God's Holy Spirit brings those people closer together.

EXPLAIN Second Experiment

- For our next experiment, I am taking a large can and placing it near the edge of the table top.
- I am now taking a tea light candle and lighting it.
- I am now putting the lighted candle behind the can of soup, so that the can of soup is between the edge of the table and the lighted candle.
- I am going to try and blow the candle out from the edge of the table that has the can of soup between me and the candle. I can't even see the candle right now.
- What do you think, do you think I can blow it out? Or will the wind go right past the candle?
- [Take guesses]
- I need a volunteer to do this for me.
- Stand right here with the can between you and the candle. Make sure you can't see the candle. Blow straight at the can.
- [Do it! The candle flame should go out]
- What happened?

TELL

- When wind comes into contact with a round surface, it speeds up to go around the curved surface and "hugs" the curve.
- God's Holy Spirit is like the wind because when we are presented with an obstacle, like the soup can, and we ask God for help, God will lead us around the obstacle.

EXPLAIN Third Experiment

- For our third experiment, I am taking a hair dryer and plugging it in and turning it on *high* (and *cool* if available).
- I'm holding the hair dryer so that it is blowing the air straight up.
- I am now taking a ping pong ball and I am placing it in the flow of air from the hair dryer.
- I am planning on letting go of the ball. When I do let go of the ping pong ball, what do you think is going to happen? (turn dryer off to hear answers)
- Ok, we've shared our ideas about what's going to happen, so now I'm going to actually let go of the ping pong ball in the hair dryer air stream.
- [Note: Practice this ahead of time with the dryer you'll be using since it takes a little patience

finding the right distance of where to let go of the ball from the mouth of the dryer. But when you find the right distance, the ping pong ball will stay floating in the air.]

- What happened?!?
- What do you think will happen if I tip the hair dryer a few degrees to the side? Do you think the ball will fall out?
- Let's find out!
- Ok, I've turned the hair dryer off. Would someone like to try next? (let a number of the kids try it – after a few give it a shot, tell the rest of the class they can try it after class, but that the class has to keep going).

TELL

- Since the air stream from the hair dryer moves faster around the side of the ball (and thus exerts less pressure) than the still air on top of the ball, the heavier air pressure on top of the ball holds it firmly in place.
- When we seek God, God's Holy Spirit will lift us up and hold us when we're feeling low and sad and discouraged, just like the wind lifted up and held the ping pong ball.

EXPLAIN Fourth Experiment

- For our fourth experiment, I am taking out this long wind tube (or large garbage bag).
- Now I would like to blow this tube up. How many breaths do you think I'll need to blow it up? Ten? Twenty? FIFTY!!!!
- That's too many breaths for me. I need a volunteer to try it out.
- [choose a volunteer – hopefully they try to blow the tube up like they would a paper bag – stop them after 10 breaths or so]
- Thank you for showing us how many breaths it would take to blow this up.
- Who here, after seeing what just happened, thinks I can blow this whole tube up with just ONE breath?
- I need a volunteer to hold the closed end of the wind tube.
- Now I'm going to hold the opening of the wind tube about 10 inches away from my face and I'm going to hold the mouth of the wind tube wide open.
- Then I'm going to blow one big, long breath straight down the middle of the wind tube before closing the mouth of the wind tube to capture the air.
- [Do it!]

TELL

- Pretty cool, yeah?
- The faster moving air pulls air from the room into the bag with it. Have you ever been on the side of the road when a big bus or truck sped by? You probably felt the rush of air that the vehicle was pulling along with it. Your breath acts in the same way when you blow into the WindTube.
- That's pretty unexpected, isn't it?
- When we learn to surrender to God's Holy Spirit, and let even just a small breath of God's Holy Spirit into us, then more of God's Holy Spirit comes in at the same time.

If there's time (at least 10 more minutes of class time)

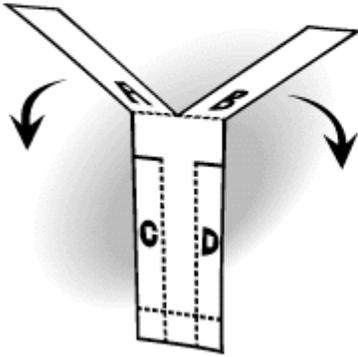
EXPLAIN Fifth Experiment

For our last experiment, we're going to make paper helicopters and then try to land them on a target.

[Instructions on page 9 are mostly unedited and are from
http://www.exploratorium.edu/science_explorer/roto-copter.html.]

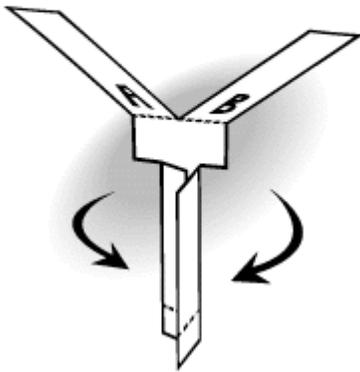
[The "Roto-Copter Pattern" is on page 11 of this lesson plan. Have print outs (one per kid) ready ahead of time]

1 Print out the Roto-Copter pattern. Click [here](#) to go to pattern page. Cut along the solid lines only. Fold on the dotted lines.

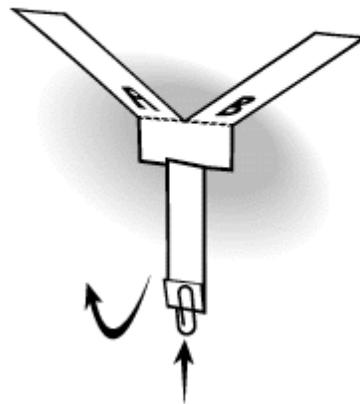


2 Fold A toward you. Fold B away from you.

3 Fold C and D over each other so they overlap.



4 Fold the bottom up and put a paper clip on it.



5 Hold the Roto-Copter by the paper clip. Throw it like a baseball, as high and far as you can. It will spin to the floor. You can also stand on a chair or on the stairs and drop it.

TELL

- After you've made your Roto-Copter, come over here [a designated place with a newspaper set up on the ground with a circle (2-foot in diameter) marked on it and a cereal bowl in the middle of the marked circle. Also there will be a non-folding chair on the edge of the newspaper]
- We're going to take turns standing on this chair and dropping our Roto-copters on to the target.
- After you drop your Roto-copter, do not go and get it. While you get off the chair, the shepherd or I will get it for you.
- You get 3 points for landing in the bowl, 2 points for landing any part of your Roto-copter inside the circle or 1 point for landing on the newspaper.

DO Roto-copter game

TELL

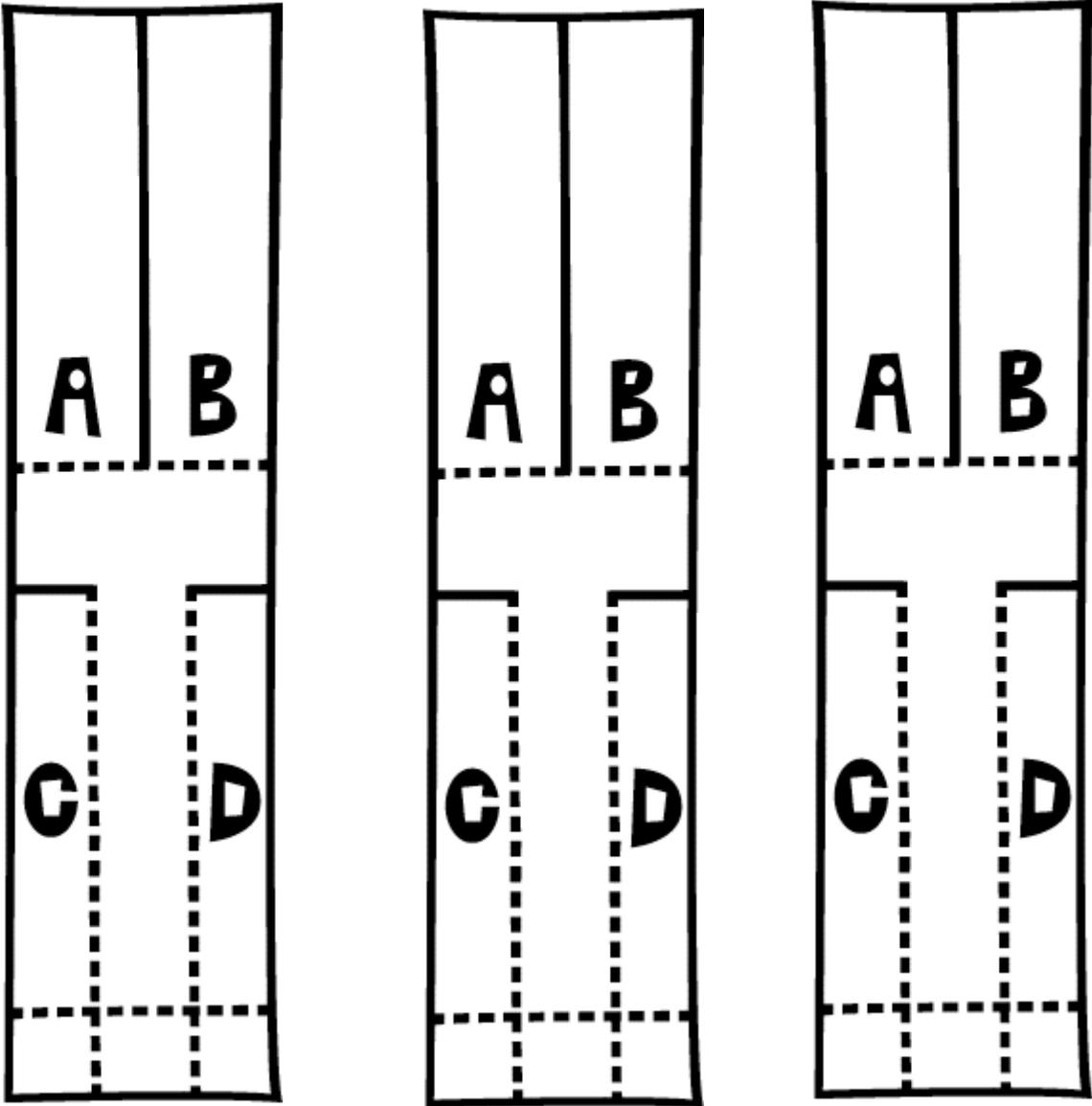
- Our Roto-copters didn't always land where we wanted them to land, did they?
- But they landed where the wind put them, right?
- The same thing is true for us when we surrender to God's Holy Spirit – that means we're not in control anymore of where we end up.
- And that can be scary, like what we talked about at the beginning – the wind blowing us around could be understood as scary.
- Again, this is why Jesus tells Nicodemus that "God so loved the world," as a reminder that surrendering to God is not a bad thing, but a good thing.
- Also, as we can see with the other experiments, when we trust God's Holy Spirit, exciting and good things happen.
- And that's the good news for today!
- Thank you for your participation and help!

CLEAN UP

Suggested Variations

At the very end of this lesson plan, there is an alternative wind experiment to use in place of one of the five, in case one them you don't like or isn't working right for you.

ROTO-COPTER PATTERN



If you do not like one of the five experiments and would like an alternative one, here you go:

EXPLAIN Experiment

- For our ____ experiment, I am placing two books on the table, about six inches apart from each other.
- I am now taking a regular 8 ½ x 11 piece of paper and laying it on top of the books so that it covers the gap...sort of like a bridge.
- Now if I were to blow under the paper, what do you think will happen?
- [Take answers]
- Thank you for your ideas.
- I need a volunteer to come up here and blow under the paper to help us see what happens.
- What happened? [paper should bend toward the table, not get blown off the books)
- What do you think will happen if our volunteer blows above the paper?

TELL

- Faster moving air has less pressure than slower moving air.
- Slower moving air pushed the paper down the first time, and pushed the paper up the second time.
- That's pretty unexpected, isn't it?
- When we surrender to God's Holy Spirit, then we will be moved by the Spirit in unexpected ways, but the more we experience being moved by the Holy Spirit, the more it'll make sense to us and the more we'll trust God.