

Don't Look Back

LOWER ELEMENTARY LESSON PLAN

Theme: Set new goals for the New Year

Scripture: Philippians 3:12-14

Memory Verse: Philippians 3:14 - I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

The Children's Sermon

How many of you have ever been involved in a foot race? What is the one thing that can slow you down? (Let the kids answer.) Yes, all of those are correct. But, one thing I remember hearing from a PE teacher about what could slow you down in a race was this, 'Never look back.' Our PE teacher told us that looking back in a race slows you down. (If time & space permits, you could have two children run a short race.) He told us it slows you down for two (2) reasons; 1) You are spending energy & time at looking where you have been & not where you are going, 2) You loose sight of the mark or finish line. Both of these things make you loose focus which in turn causes you valuable time in a race.

Paul speaks of this very thing in the Bible. It can be found in Philippians 3:12-14, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Paul is talking about Pressing toward a goal, or winning a race. He knows that he has not won the race but, he counts himself still in the race trying to obtain the prize. He states in verse 13; in running the race one thing he does is forgetting those things that are in the past and reaches for the future. In other words, he doesn't look back! He knows that if there was some goal he did not achieve last year, he is not going to dwell on it just reach for those things he can do in the coming year.

Sometimes, we all do things we wish we had done differently. Maybe last year, you didn't listen to Mom and Dad as much as you should have, or perhaps you forgot to invite someone to church. You might have wanted to read your Bible more, tell someone about how much Jesus loves them, or be a better friend. But guess what? It's okay! It's a new year, and that means you have a new chance to set goals and try again.

Think about one thing you want to do better this year. It could be anything! Maybe you want to help out more at home, or learn a new Bible verse every week. The important thing is to pick something that matters to you.

Remember, pressing on isn't just for this year. It's something we can do all our lives. There will always be new goals to reach and new races to run. And the best prize of all is knowing that Jesus is with us every step of the way, cheering us on. With God's help and a bit of determination, you can reach any goal you set. So, keep your eyes on the prize, and let's press on together!

So, let's pray together now: "Dear God, thank you for giving us new chances every day. Help us to pick a goal and press on toward it, without looking back. We know that with Your help, we can do it. Thank you for loving us and being with us in our race. Amen."

Bible Memory Verse

Philippians 3:14 - I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

You Will Need:

- Construction paper
- Markers or crayons
- Stickers or glitter

Get Ready:

- Cut the construction paper into large, manageable pieces for the children to handle.
- Set up a table with markers, crayons, stickers, and glitter.

Do This:

1. Ask each child to think about a goal they want to set for the New Year. It could be learning something new, being kinder, helping more at home, or anything they feel is important.
2. Have them draw or write their goal on the construction paper using the markers or crayons. Encourage creativity! They can decorate their goal with stickers or glitter to make it shine.
3. Once everyone is done, allow each child to share their goal with the class if they're comfortable. Discuss how reaching for our goals is like pressing on toward what God calls us to do, just like the memory verse says.

Bible Interactive Experience

You'll Need:

- A large poster board or a roll of paper
- Markers or crayons
- Sticky notes or small pieces of paper
- Tape or glue
- A Bible

Get Ready:

- Write "Our Race to the New Year" at the top of the poster board or paper.
- Draw a simple track or path that winds from one side of the board to the other, with a starting line at one end and a finish line at the other.
- Read Philippians 3:12-14 and think about how it can relate to setting new goals.

Do this:

1. Begin by gathering the children and reading Philippians 3:12-14 together. Explain that just like in a race, we need to keep moving forward and setting new goals for ourselves, especially with the New Year coming.
2. Ask each child to think of a goal they want to set for the New Year. It could be anything from being kinder to siblings, reading more books, helping out more at home, or learning something new. Have them write or draw their goal on a sticky note or piece of paper.
3. One by one, let the children come up and stick or glue their goal along the path on the "Our Race to the New Year" poster. As they place their goal, encourage them to say it out loud to the group.
4. Once all the goals are on the poster, lead a short discussion. Ask questions like, "Why is it important to keep reaching for what is ahead, just like the Bible verse says?" and "How can we help each other achieve our goals?"

5. Hang the poster in a place where the children will see it often, reminding them of their goals and the journey they're on together.

Snack Activity: Race to the Prize Fruit Cups

You'll Need:

- Various fruits (grapes, strawberries, blueberries, bananas)
- Clear plastic cups
- Wooden skewers
- Paper and markers for goal flags

Get Ready: Wash and prepare the fruits by cutting them into bite-sized pieces if necessary. Write Philippians 3:12-14 on a large paper and discuss what it means to press on toward goals, like running a race, and how we can set new goals for the New Year.

Do this:

1. Let each child pick their favorite fruits and fill their cup to make a colorful fruit cup. As they do, talk about different goals they might have for the new year, like reading more books, helping out at home, or learning something new.
2. While they fill their cups, explain that just like they are reaching for the different fruits, we reach for different goals in our lives. And sometimes, just like some fruits might be at the bottom, some goals take more time to reach.
3. Have the children write a goal for the new year on a small paper flag using markers. Attach the flag to a wooden skewer and then stick it into their fruit cup. Share that the flag represents their goal for the New Year, and eating the fruit is like the journey to achieving their goals, reminding them of the scripture to 'press on toward the goal'.

Game Activity: Race to the New Year

You'll Need:

- A large open space, either indoors or outdoors
- Chalk (if outdoors) or tape (if indoors) to mark the start and finish lines
- Index cards
- Pens or markers
- A box or basket

Get Ready: Before the game, write down simple, achievable goals for the New Year on the index cards, one goal per card. These could be things like 'read a new book', 'help mom and dad with chores', or 'make a new friend'. Fold them and place them in the box or basket. Mark a start line and a finish line about 20 feet apart.

Do this:

1. Gather the children at the start line and explain that this race represents their journey into the New Year. Each step they take towards the finish line is like moving closer to their goals.
2. One at a time, have each child draw a goal from the box or basket. Read it aloud to them.
3. After hearing their goal, the child races from the start line to the finish line, symbolizing their commitment to working towards that goal in the New Year.
4. Once everyone has had a turn, gather the children and discuss how reaching our goals is like a race: we need to keep moving forward, not get distracted, and remember what we're working towards, just like Philippians 3:12-14 teaches us.

Craft Activity: Racing Towards My Goals Car Craft

You'll Need:

- Construction paper (various colors)
- Markers or crayons
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- A toy car (for inspiration)
- Stickers or decorations (optional)

Get Ready: Before the activity, cut out car shapes from the construction paper. Each child will need one car shape. Also, write Philippians 3:12-14 on a large piece of paper or board for all the children to see.

Do this:

1. Start by reading Philippians 3:12-14 together. Explain that just like Paul wanted to 'press on' towards his goals, we can set new goals for the New Year and work hard to achieve them.
2. Give each child a car shape and ask them to think about one goal they want to set for the New Year. It could be learning something new, being kinder, helping more at home, or anything they wish to achieve.
3. Have them write or draw their goal on the car shape. Then, they can decorate their car with markers, crayons, and stickers. Encourage creativity! As they work, talk about how their car represents them racing towards their goals, and remind them that sometimes reaching a goal takes time and effort, just like a race.
4. Once everyone is done, create a 'Goal Race Track' on a wall or bulletin board where all the cars can be displayed. This will serve as a reminder throughout the year of the goals they've set and the 'race' they are running towards achieving them.

Prayer Activity: Racing Towards Our Goals

You'll Need:

- A large poster board
- Markers or crayons
- Sticky notes

Get Ready: Before the class, draw a race track on the poster board with a start and finish line. Divide the track into several sections, each representing a month of the year.

Do this:

1. Start by reading Philippians 3:12-14 together. Explain that just like a race, we always want to keep moving towards our goals, especially in the New Year.
2. Ask each child to think of a goal they want to achieve in the New Year. It could be learning a new skill, being kinder, reading more books, or anything they wish to improve on.
3. Give each child a sticky note, and have them write their goal on it. Then, let them place their sticky note on the start line of the race track.
4. Each month, revisit the race track. Encourage the children to move their sticky notes forward based on their progress towards their goals. Celebrate each small step forward, reminding them that it's about moving forward, not being perfect.
5. Close with a prayer, asking God to help each child reach their goals, reminding them that God is with them in the race towards their goals, just like Paul wrote in Philippians.