

# Don't Look Back

## UPPER 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:

- A long roll of butcher paper
- Markers or crayons
- Stickers or stamps with a 'prize' or 'goal' theme

Get Ready:

- Unroll a length of butcher paper on the floor and secure the ends with tape to prevent it from rolling back up.
- Write 'START' at one end of the paper and 'FINISH' at the other end, drawing a winding path between the two.

Do This:

1. Explain to the children that the path on the paper represents our journey toward the goal Paul talks about in Philippians 3:14.
2. Have each child pick a marker or crayon and draw themselves somewhere on the path, illustrating something they are doing or can do to 'press on' toward their goals in faith.
3. Give out stickers or stamps for the children to decorate their path with symbols of 'prizes' or 'goals' they believe God has for them. Discuss how these can be steps or milestones in their journey with Christ.

## Bible Interactive Experience

You'll Need:

- A large poster board
- Markers or colored pencils
- Sticky notes
- A Bible or printed copies of Philippians 3:12-14
- A "finish line" tape or ribbon
- Small prizes or certificates for completion

Get Ready:

- Set up a "finish line" area in your classroom.
- Write Philippians 3:12-14 at the top of the poster board.
- Divide the poster board into three sections: "Press On," "Forget What Is Behind," and "Strain Toward What Is Ahead."

Do this:

1. **\*\*Introduction to Philippians 3:12-14\*\***: Start by reading Philippians 3:12-14 together as a class. Discuss what it means to "press on" towards goals, forgetting past failures, and focusing on future achievements in the context of faith and personal growth.
2. **\*\*Personal Reflection\*\***: Give each student a sticky note and ask them to write down one personal goal for the new year that relates to their faith, personal improvement, or helping others. Encourage them to think about how they can "press on" towards these goals, despite past setbacks.
3. **\*\*Creating a Goal Poster\*\***: Have students come up one by one to place their sticky note in the appropriate section of the poster board. As they place their note, ask them to share why they chose that goal and how it relates to the scripture.

4. **\*\*Race to the Finish Line\*\***: Organize a fun relay race where students must complete a small task (e.g., recite a memory verse, solve a puzzle related to a Bible story) before running to the "finish line." Before each student's turn, remind them of Philippians 3:12-14, emphasizing the importance of perseverance and focusing on the goal ahead.

5. **\*\*Reflection and Prayer\*\***: After the activities, gather the students and reflect on what they learned about setting goals and striving to achieve them in light of Philippians 3:12-14. Close with a prayer, asking for God's guidance and strength to press on towards their goals in the coming year.

6. **\*\*Award Ceremony\*\***: Hand out small prizes or certificates to all participants, celebrating their commitment to setting new goals and striving towards them, just as Paul encourages in Philippians 3:12-14.

## Snack Activity: Pressing Onward Pretzel Sticks

You'll Need:

- Pretzel sticks
- White chocolate chips
- Sprinkles (various colors)
- Wax paper
- A microwave-safe bowl
- A spoon
- Paper and pen for each child

Get Ready: Melt the white chocolate chips in the microwave-safe bowl. Heat for 30 seconds, stir, and repeat until fully melted.

Do this:

1. Have each child write down a personal goal for the New Year on the paper, inspired by Philippians 3:12-14, focusing on 'pressing on' towards goals and forgetting what is behind.
2. Dip one end of the pretzel stick into the melted white chocolate to represent 'covering' the past year with grace and looking forward to the new.
3. Before the chocolate hardens, sprinkle the colored sprinkles over the chocolate to represent the joy and variety of experiences the New Year will bring as they press toward their goals.
4. As they eat their pretzel stick, encourage them to discuss their goals and how they can 'press on' towards achieving them in the coming year.

## Game Activity: Pressing Forward Relay

You'll Need:

- A large open space (preferably outdoors)
- Cones or markers to set up start and finish lines
- Notecards and pens
- A prize for the winning team (optional)

Get Ready: Write Philippians 3:12-14 on a large poster or whiteboard where all the children can see it. Set up a relay race track with a start and finish line using the cones or markers. Divide the notecards into two stacks. On one stack, write challenges or setbacks (e.g., 'You forgot to do your homework,' 'You lost a game,' etc.). On the other stack, write positive actions or goals (e.g., 'Read a chapter of a book,' 'Help a friend in need,' etc.). Divide the children into teams of equal numbers.

Do this:

1. Each team lines up at the start line. The first player from each team runs to the halfway point where the stacks of notecards are placed. They pick a challenge card, read it aloud, then run back to the start, tag the next player who then picks a goal card, reads it aloud, and both run to the finish line together.
2. The next player in line repeats step 1, choosing a challenge card when it's their turn and then running with a partner who chooses a goal card. This continues until all team members have participated.
3. The team that finishes first is celebrated for their teamwork and perseverance. After the game, gather the children and discuss how the challenges and goals relate to Philippians 3:12-14. Encourage them to share personal goals for the New Year, focusing on 'pressing on toward the goal.'

## Craft Activity: Pressing Onward: A Philippians 3:12-14 Goal Banner

You'll Need:

- A large piece of fabric or a banner
- Fabric markers or paint
- Stencils (optional)
- Bible or printed version of Philippians 3:12-14

Get Ready: Read Philippians 3:12-14 together and discuss what it means to 'press on' towards goals that honor God. Talk about the importance of setting goals for the New Year that help us grow closer to God.

Do this:

1. Have each child think of one or two goals they want to set for the New Year that help them 'press on' in their faith journey. These could be reading the Bible daily, praying more often, being kinder to siblings, etc.
2. Using the fabric markers or paint, each child writes their goals on the banner. They can decorate around their goals with symbols or drawings that represent their journey or aspirations.
3. Once everyone has added their goals to the banner, hang it in a prominent place where the class meets as a reminder to keep 'pressing on' towards their goals throughout the year.

## Prayer Activity: Pressing Onward: Setting Goals with God

You'll Need:

- A Bible or printed excerpt of Philippians 3:12-14
- Notebooks and pens for each child
- A 'Goal Box' or container

Get Ready: Before the class, write Philippians 3:12-14 on a large poster or whiteboard where everyone can see. Prepare the 'Goal Box' by decorating it with inspirational words and verses.

Do this:

1. Start by reading Philippians 3:12-14 together as a class. Discuss what it means to 'press on' and how we can forget what is behind and strive toward what is ahead.



2. Ask each child to reflect on their own 'race' and think about one goal they want to set for the New Year that helps them 'press on' towards God. This could be reading the Bible more, praying for others, being kinder at school, etc.

3. Have each child write their goal on a piece of paper, fold it, and place it in the 'Goal Box.' Pray together over the box, asking God to help each child achieve their goals and to keep pressing on towards Him throughout the year.