

Happy New Year!

UPPER ELEMENTARY LESSON PLAN

Theme: We don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future.

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 8:7

Memory Verse: Since no one knows the future, who can tell someone else what is to come? - Ecclesiastes 8:7

The Children's Sermon

This morning I have two calendars with me. This calendar is for the year 2xxx. As you know, we have finished up the year 2xxx. You can see that my calendar is all marked up with the things I did over the past year. This calendar is of no use to me now except to help me to remember what I did last year.

This is my new calendar for the year 2xxx. You can see how nice and clean all of the pages are. This calendar is all ready for me to start planning for next year. Whenever I make an appointment or have something important to remember, I will mark it on this calendar. Pretty soon, my new calendar will start to look a lot like the old calendar as I make plans for the future

There is nothing wrong in planning for the future, but we need to remember that no matter what our plans may be, we can't know for sure what is in the future. The Bible says, "Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come?" We can put appointments on this calendar from now to next December, but the only day that we can be sure of is today!

Some people become worried and frightened because they can't be sure of the future, but we don't need to worry, because even though we don't know what the future holds, we know who holds the future. The future is in God's hands, so we can rest easy in the plans that He has made for us. We can't be sure of tomorrow, but we have today, so we need to try to live it the way God planned it!

Dear Lord, thank you for giving us today. Help us to live it the way you have planned it. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Now, let's talk a bit more about this idea of future uncertainty. It's like when you're planning to go to the park tomorrow, but then it rains. You didn't know it was going to rain, right? That's a little bit like how the future works. We can make plans, but sometimes things change, and that's okay.

God knows all about future uncertainty, and He tells us not to worry about tomorrow because He's already there. He's like a friend who walks into a dark room first and turns on the light for us. With God, we don't have to be scared of what's coming because He promises to be with us every step of the way.

Imagine you're on a big, exciting adventure, but you're walking through a thick fog. You can't see very far ahead, and that might make you a bit nervous. But what if I told you that you have the best guide in the universe with you? God is that guide. He knows the path perfectly, even when we can't see it because of the fog of future uncertainty.

Sometimes, we might wish we had a special machine that could tell us everything about the future. But think about this: if we knew everything that was going to happen,

we might miss out on the fun of surprises and the lessons we learn from challenges. God gives us just enough light for the step we're on, teaching us to trust Him more.

Let's also remember that God wants us to talk to Him about our worries. Just like you would tell a friend if something is bothering you, God wants you to tell Him. When we pray and tell God about our feelings, He listens. And even though the future uncertainty might not go away, we can feel peace in our hearts knowing that God is in control.

God also gives us stories in the Bible of people who trusted Him during times of future uncertainty. Think of Noah, who built an ark even though he didn't understand why at first. Or Abraham, who went on a long journey not knowing where he was going. They didn't have all the answers, but they knew God was with them, and that was enough.

So, what can we do when we feel worried about the future? First, we can pray and talk to God about our feelings. Second, we can remember the stories from the Bible and how God helped those people. And third, we can try to live each day the best we can, doing kind things for others and following what God teaches us.

In the end, future uncertainty is a part of life, but it doesn't have to be scary. It can be an adventure where we learn to trust God more and more. And remember, no matter what happens tomorrow, next week, or next year, God's love for us is certain. That's something we can always be sure of.

Dear Lord, even when we're not sure about what's coming, help us to trust You. Thank you for being with us always, even in times of future uncertainty. Help us to remember that Your love is something we can always be sure of. Amen.

Bible Memory Verse

Since no one knows the future, who can tell someone else what is to come? - Ecclesiastes 8:7

You Will Need:

- Blank paper
- Colored pencils or markers
- Envelopes

Get Ready:

- Gather all materials and set up a work area for each child.
- Write the memory verse on a large piece of paper and display it where all the children can see it.

Do This:

1. Ask the children to reflect on the memory verse and what it means to not know the future but trust God with it. Have them share their thoughts.
2. Instruct each child to draw or write about something they hope for or dream about for their future on the blank paper. Encourage creativity and reassure them there are no wrong answers.
3. Once they have finished their drawings or writings, have them fold their paper and place it in an envelope. Tell them to write a message to their future selves on the outside of the envelope, reminding them to trust God with their future.
4. Collect the envelopes and decide together on a place to keep them until a future date when they will be reopened and shared.

Bible Interactive Experience

You'll Need:

- A large piece of poster board or a whiteboard
- Markers or chalk
- Sticky notes
- A Bible or printed copies of Ecclesiastes 8:7
- Small toy clocks or printed pictures of clocks
- A "mystery" box (any box that can be closed and reopened, big enough to hold several small items)

Get Ready:

- Write Ecclesiastes 8:7 on the poster board or whiteboard clearly for all to see.
- Inside the "mystery" box, place several items that could represent possible future careers or adventures (e.g., a toy airplane for a pilot, a stethoscope for a doctor, a globe for a traveler, etc.).
- Prepare a brief explanation of Ecclesiastes 8:7, emphasizing that while we can't foresee our future, we can trust God who knows and holds our future.

Do this:

1. Start by reading Ecclesiastes 8:7 together and discuss what it means in simple terms. Explain that even though we can't see the future, we can have faith that God is in control.
2. Ask each child to pick a sticky note and write a dream or hope they have for the future without showing it to anyone. Once they've written it down, have them stick it onto the poster board around the scripture.
3. Next, invite the children to take turns drawing an item from the "mystery" box without looking. Once they have their item, they can share how they think that item

could relate to someone's future and how trusting God with our future is important, even if we don't know what it holds.

4. Finally, place the toy clocks or pictures of clocks around the poster board. Discuss how time moves forward and we move with it, but God is timeless and already knows every moment of our future. Encourage the children to trust God with their hopes and dreams they wrote on their sticky notes.

5. Conclude with a prayer, asking God to help everyone trust Him more with their futures, knowing He has good plans for us.

Snack Activity: Future's Mystery Cookies

You'll Need:

- Sugar cookie dough (store-bought or homemade)
- Edible markers or food coloring pens
- Cookie cutters (optional: shapes like stars, clouds, or hearts)

Get Ready: Preheat your oven according to the cookie dough package instructions. Roll out your dough on a clean, floured surface to about 1/4 inch thickness.

Do this:

1. If using cookie cutters, press them into the dough to make shapes that remind you of dreams, hopes, or the unknown future (like stars for aspirations or clouds for the mysteries). If not using cutters, simply cut the dough into squares or circles.
2. Place your cookies on a baking sheet and bake according to the package or recipe instructions. Let them cool completely after baking.
3. Once cooled, use the edible markers to write or draw symbols, words, or pictures that represent faith, hope, and the understanding that while we don't know what the future holds, we trust in God who holds our future. Ideas include drawing clocks with

no hands, question marks, or even simple phrases like 'Trust God' or 'Faith' inspired by Ecclesiastes 8:7.

Game Activity: Future Quest

You'll Need:

- A large open space (indoor or outdoor)
- Chalk or tape for marking areas
- Cards with future-oriented scenarios written on them (e.g., 'You become a famous artist.', 'You invent something that changes the world.', 'You help people in need.'). Include some simple, everyday scenarios as well ('You find a lost puppy.', 'You learn a new hobby.').

Get Ready: Mark a start line and a finish line in your open space, about 20 feet apart. Place the scenario cards in a basket at the start line.

Do this:

1. Divide the children into two teams. Have each team line up at the start line.
2. One by one, a player from each team will draw a scenario card, read it aloud, and then act out walking into their future based on the scenario (e.g., if the card says 'You become a famous artist.', they might pretend to paint as they walk). The rest of the team must guess what the future scenario is before the player reaches the finish line.
3. Once the scenario is correctly guessed, the next player in line takes their turn. If the team doesn't guess before the player reaches the finish line, the player reveals the scenario before returning to the line.
4. The game continues until all scenarios have been acted out. The team with the most correctly guessed scenarios wins.

This game is designed to remind children that while we don't know exactly what the future holds, we can trust in God's plan for us, as inspired by Ecclesiastes 8:7.

Craft Activity: Time Capsule: God Knows Our Future

You'll Need:

- A small box or jar with a lid
- Paper and pens
- Decorative supplies (stickers, markers, glitter, etc.)
- Bible

Get Ready: Gather all materials on a large table, making sure there are enough supplies for each child. Print out Ecclesiastes 8:7 on a paper for reference.

Do this:

1. Start by discussing Ecclesiastes 8:7, explaining that while we can't predict everything that will happen in our lives, we can trust God who knows our future. Ask the children to share their thoughts or feelings about this.
2. Have each child decorate their box or jar with the supplies provided, encouraging them to express their faith and hope for the future through their designs.
3. Once the decorations are complete, ask the children to write down their dreams, prayers, and things they are hopeful for in the future on pieces of paper. They can also include a favorite Bible verse, with Ecclesiastes 8:7 being a suggested option.
4. After they've finished writing, have them fold their papers and place them inside their time capsules. Close the capsules and decide as a group whether they will open them at a certain time in the future, or if they will keep them sealed as a reminder that only God knows what the future holds.

5. Conclude with a prayer, asking God to guide each child into the future and reminding them that He is always with them, knowing and holding their future.

Prayer Activity: Future in His Hands

You'll Need:

- A large poster board
- Markers or colored pencils
- Sticky notes

Get Ready: Before the class, write 'We don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future.' at the top of the poster board. Draw a large hand in the center to represent God's hand.

Do this:

1. Start by reading Ecclesiastes 8:7 together as a class. Discuss what it means to not know what the future holds but to trust that God is in control.
2. Ask each student to think about their hopes for the future or things they worry about. Have them write these on sticky notes.
3. One by one, let the students come up and stick their notes onto the poster board, placing them within God's hand. Encourage them to say a short prayer as they place their note, asking God to take care of their future.
4. Once all notes are placed, lead the class in a group prayer, committing everyone's future into God's hands and asking for trust and peace to replace worry.