Little Leaders Children Lesson
Topic: "Don't Let Yesterday Stop You!"

Scripture Focus: Philippians 3:12–14

Theme: Yesterday may have good moments and hard moments, but we cannot stay stuck there. We can keep growing, move our thoughts forward, and keep following Jesus.

Materials Needed:
• Bible
• Open space for movement

Words to Know

Opening Prayer - A way to invite God in and get students to pray

1. Opening Activity - an activity to get the children ready to focus in
2. Memory Verse - the verse that will be taught to children that they may commit to memory
3. Transition - a statement that helps you move smoothly through lesson
4. The Lesson - is the outline of the lesson
5. Main Point - is the topic of the point you will teach in lesson, sometimes it's one and sometimes it's more than one.
6. ( ) Inside the parenthesis are little things for the teachers to say or do
7. Explanation - a statement that further explains a word or point
8. Engager/Discussion Question - a question or activity to get children involved
9. Reinforcer - something used to drive the main point(s) home
10. Bottom Line - the close of the lesson
11. Did We Get It - an activity to make sure children understood lesson and takeaways

Closing Prayer - a way to thank God and get students to pray

Opening Prayer

The teacher(s) will ask a student volunteer to pray.

Review of Children's Church Expectations

The teacher(s) will go over the expectations with the students.

Review of Recent Memory Verse

1 John 4:4 – "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."

Opening Activity: "Forward, Back, Focus!"

(The teacher(s) will ask all the students to stand on one side of the room. The goal is to reach the other side.)

Tell the students:

"The other side of the room is our goal. Your job is to keep moving toward it, but you have to listen carefully to my directions!"

Teach the students three commands:

When the teacher says:

"FORWARD!" – Take one big step toward the goal.

"YESTERDAY!" – Turn around and take one step back.

"FOCUS!" – Turn back toward the goal, point forward, and say:

"I'm moving forward!"

Begin slowly:

"Forward!"
"Forward!"
"Yesterday!"
"Focus!"
"Forward!"

Then speed it up and mix the commands.

Continue until the students reach the other side of the room.

Bring everyone back together.

Ask:

• What happened every time you had to turn around?
• Was it easier to reach the goal when you were facing forward or backward?
• Could you keep moving toward the goal if you kept going back?

Then say:

Yesterday means something that has **already happened**.

Yesterday can have good things:

• A good grade
• Winning a game
• Doing something really well

Yesterday can also have hard things:

• Making a mistake
• Losing something
• Getting in trouble
• Having a bad day

But if we keep looking backward, yesterday can become a **distraction**.

A distraction is something that pulls our attention away from where it needs to be.

Everybody say:

"Yesterday already happened!"

Teacher:

"SO WHERE AM I GOING?"

Students point forward:

"FORWARD!"

Today we are going to learn that Paul had a past too, but Paul would not let yesterday stop what Jesus was calling Paul to do next!

Today's Memory Verse

(Must write it on the board and teach it with hand motions so students can commit to memory.)

Philippians 3:13 – "Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead."

Hand Motions:

• Forgetting what lies behind – (Point behind you)
• And straining – (Pretend to reach with effort)
• Forward – (Take one step forward)
• To what lies ahead – (Point straight ahead)

Repeat the verse together three times:

• First time — standing still
• Second time — turning backward on "behind" and forward on "ahead"
• Third time — take a big step forward together at the end

Transition to the Lesson:

(The teacher(s) will say)

"Sometimes we think distractions are only things happening around us. But something that already happened can distract us too. Maybe we keep thinking about a mistake we made. Maybe somebody hurt our feelings. Or maybe we did something really well and now we think we do not have to keep trying. Paul had good things and hard things in the past, but Paul decided, 'I am not staying back there. I am going to keep moving toward what Jesus has for me next!'"

Lesson Scripture:

Philippians 3:12–14 (Children's Edition)

Main Point 1: Refuse to Settle

Read Philippians 3:12 – Paul said, "I have not already reached the goal, but I keep pressing on."

Discussion Question: If you do something really well one time, does that mean you never have to keep learning or trying?

(The teachers should allow the students to answer and then add): No! Doing well is something to celebrate, but we can still keep growing. Maybe you got an A on your last test. Great job! You

still study for the next one. Maybe you scored a goal. Awesome! You still practice. Paul knew there was still more growing to do. Do not stop just because yesterday went well. **Keep growing!**

Main Point 2: Redirect Your Thoughts

Read Philippians 3:13 – Paul said, "Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead."

Discussion Question: What can happen if you keep thinking about an old mistake over and over again?

(The teachers should allow the students to answer and then add): An old mistake can make you feel like you cannot do better today. But yesterday is over. You can learn from what happened without staying stuck in it. If you made a bad choice, learn from it. If something hurt you, talk about it and get help. Then remind yourself, **"I can make a better choice today."** You cannot change yesterday, but you can choose where your thoughts go today.

Main Point 3: Run Toward Jesus

Read Philippians 3:14 – Paul said, "I press on toward the goal, toward the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus."

Discussion Question: When something from yesterday keeps bothering you, what can help you keep moving forward?

(The teachers should allow the students to answer and then add): Keep your attention on Jesus. You can pray. You can remember what Jesus teaches. You can make the next right choice. Your past does not get to tell you that you cannot move forward. Jesus can help you keep going. Yesterday may be part of your story, but it does not have to control what you do today.

Second Activity: "Keep Moving Forward!"

(The teacher(s) will have the students stand on one side of the room. The other side of the room represents "WHAT'S NEXT.")

Tell the students:

"Paul said we cannot stay stuck in what is behind us. So in this game, every situation will come from **yesterday**, but you have to decide what to do with it so you can keep moving forward."

Teach the students three active responses:

CELEBRATE AND STEP
Clap twice, then take one big step forward.

LEARN AND STEP
Touch your head, say **"I learned from it!"**, then take one big step forward.

GET HELP AND STEP
Raise your hand, say **"I can get help!"**, then take one big step forward.

Tell the students:

"Listen carefully. Every situation from yesterday does not need the same response. You have to decide what would help you move forward."

Begin calling out situations in this mixed order:

"Yesterday somebody hurt your feelings, and you are still really upset."

Best response:

GET HELP AND STEP!

Ask:

"Who is a trusted grown-up you could talk to?"

"Yesterday you got an A on your test."

Best response:

CELEBRATE AND STEP!

Ask:

"Why shouldn't getting an A make you stop trying?"

"Yesterday you forgot to turn in your homework."

Best response:

LEARN AND STEP!

Ask:

“What could you do differently today?”

“Yesterday you did something you are really proud of.”

Best response:

CELEBRATE AND STEP!

Ask:

“Can you be proud of what you did and still keep growing?”

“Yesterday you made a bad choice and got in trouble.”

Best response:

LEARN AND STEP!

Ask:

“What could you learn so you make a better choice next time?”

“Yesterday something happened at school that keeps making you feel sad.”

Best response:

GET HELP AND STEP!

Ask:

“Does moving forward mean you have to pretend you are not sad?”

Allow students to answer.

Then say:

“No. Sometimes moving forward means getting the help you need.”

“Yesterday you won your game.”

Best response:

CELEBRATE AND STEP!

Ask:

“Can you celebrate and still keep practicing?”

“Yesterday you said something mean to a friend.”

Best response:

LEARN AND STEP!

Ask:

“What else might you need to do?”

Help students identify apologizing and making a better choice.

“Yesterday something happened that you do not understand, and it is still bothering you.”

Best response:

GET HELP AND STEP!

Ask:

“Who could help you talk through what happened?”

“Yesterday you finished something that was really hard.”

Best response:

CELEBRATE AND STEP!

Ask:

“Should doing something hard make you stop trying new things?”

Continue until the students reach the other side of the room.

Once everyone reaches **WHAT’S NEXT**, have them turn around and look at where they started.

Ask:

• Did every yesterday moment need the same response?
• What did we do with good things from yesterday?
• What did we do with mistakes?
• What did we do when something still hurt or bothered us?
• Did any of those things make us stay on the other side of the room?

(The teacher(s) will say): Yesterday can teach us something, give us something to celebrate, or show us when we need help. But we do not have to stay stuck there. Paul teaches us to keep moving toward what is ahead. We can **celebrate it, learn from it, or get help with it — and still keep moving forward!**

Did We Get It? (If time permits)

Ask:

• What distraction was Paul teaching us how to defeat?
• What can happen if we keep living in yesterday?
• Does doing well yesterday mean we should stop growing today?
• What should we do with our thoughts when they keep pulling us backward?
• Who should we keep moving toward?
• What are our three main points?

Let the students answer and then repeat together:

Ask the students to repeat:

“Refuse to settle!”
“Redirect my thoughts!”
“Run toward Jesus!”

Then ask:

“WHERE AM I GOING?”

Students point forward and respond:

“FORWARD!”

Bottom Line:

“I can learn from yesterday, but I will not live there — I’m moving forward with Jesus!”

Closing Prayer:

The teacher(s) will ask a student volunteer to pray and ask God to help us keep growing, move our thoughts forward, learn from yesterday, and keep following Jesus.