**Philippians 3:12-16**

***“Press On”***

**Scripture:**Philippians 3:12-16

**Memory Verse:** *“I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

 Philippians 3:14

**Lesson Focus:** Never give up becoming more like Jesus.

**Activities and Craft:** Coloring Page, Craft for 1st and 2nd graders: Runner

3rd – 5th: Student Work Sheet to be done after large group teaching back in the classroom

**Introduction:** Relay Race: Have some type of relay race. The divide the kids up and have a little race in your room – where they have to tag the next child to go. (In the classroom it can be jumping on one foot to the end of room and then back to tag the next person to hop on one foot.)

Tell the kids that relay races are fun, but a real relay race is a little harder. The runners are positioned at different points on the track. The first runner must take a baton and run with it until they reach the next person and they have to reach forward and hand them the baton. The 2nd runner cannot look back – or they may fall while they are running. One reaches forward and the other reaches back passing the baton so that they can keep running. Our Bible story today is going to talk about this, reaching forward as we run our race to be like Jesus.

As we move through the lesson I’m going to say a phrase.

I’m going to say, “Can you ever know Jesus enough?” And you will all replay “NO”

**Bible Study:**

 Philippians 3 is a wonderful chapter in the Bible of strong goal statements:

1. “What things are gain to me, I have counted as loss”
2. “I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ”
3. “That I may know Him…”

Paul’s #1 goal was to know Jesus.

**Philippians 3:12;** *“Press On”*

 √ Has Paul reached his goal of knowing Jesus?

 √ Does Paul think that he is perfect?

 √ What does Paul do? (Press on)

 √ What does it mean to “press on?” (To keep going towards your goal.)

Every day of Paul’s life he was pursuing Jesus. He never stopped! Paul shows us the cry of his heart to be like Jesus and not give up. Our spiritual journey is never over as we become more and more like Jesus.

The older I get the more I see that I need Jesus and how far I have to go. Jesus said, “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.”* Matthew 5:6. Just like when you are starving and all you can think about is pizza and a coke we need to hunger and thirst to know Jesus. We should never be satisfied that we have learned enough about Jesus. The most amazing thing is that when you press in to know Jesus more by reading His word and praying – you will want more and more of Jesus. You can never have too much Jesus! There is no end to discovering who He is.

Paul presses on because Jesus first reached out to him. In Acts 9 – the resurrected Jesus called out to a man named Saul. Saul was on the way to Damascus to persecute Christians and throw them in jail. He did not like Jesus followers.

Do you remember what Jesus said to Saul? “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” Because Saul was persecuting Christians he was also persecuting Christ. Jesus reached out to Paul first and now Paul continually reaches to know Jesus, more and more.

**Can you ever know Jesus enough?**

 **Philippians 3:13:** *“Forget and Reach”*

1. Keep Running: Paul realizes that He has not reached his goal. This side of heaven we are never perfect in Jesus. We still sin and have wrong motives. But Paul is saying, “I know I am not perfect – but I’m going to keep running.
2. ONE THING I DO: This is the picture of a race. You have to keep your focus ahead on the finish line.

Illustration: In the 2000 Olympics there was a runner name Marla Runyan. She was a great runner but there was one difference – she was legally blind.

I remember seeing her run and listening to her after her race. She kept her focus on the finish line that she knew was up ahead. She did not stop until someone told her it was over.

1. Forget the past: Paul is not going to dwell on his past failures, disappointments, and achievements. Many times people will not let things go. They will remember things that people did to them or ways that they were hurt and they will not let the past go and move ahead. Or, they will remember old accomplishments and dwell on when they won the last race. Just like in a race – you cannot look back over your shoulder. Many races have been lost because a racer has looked back and fallen or lost their concentration.
2. Reaching for the future: Paul’s focus is the future. He knows his goal of knowing Jesus is a lifelong race. He is reaching for the things that lie ahead.

Just like a runner who sees the finish line and even though his lungs are burning and the muscles in his legs are cramping he keeps on going.

**Can you ever know Jesus enough?**

**Philippians 3:14;** *“The Goal and the Prize”*

√ What does it mean to “press” toward the goal?

 To “press’ means to urge yourself on in a race….you are not going to give

 up.

 √ How easy is it to give up?

 √ Why do we give up so quickly?

 √ What is the prize? (the upward call of Christ Jesus – to know Jesus

 fully.)

 √ What does that mean?

 **Can you ever know Jesus enough?**

**Philippians 3:15-16;** *“Let’s do this race together”*

Paul is telling us that we need to run the race together. That we need to realize that we have not already won the race – that we need to keep seeking Jesus every day of our lives.

**Can you ever know Jesus enough?**

**Conclusion:** May 15, 2014, Derek Redmond was running the 400 race in the Olympics. He was even favored to win this event. As he was running his hamstring snapped and he fell to the ground. He sat there for a few moments before he got up and limped toward the finish line. All of a sudden there was a man running onto the field and breaking through the Olympic Security team. It was his father. His dad grabbed hold of his son and helped him to the finish line. They did it together. This was a great Olympic moment, because you saw the heartbreak of the runner but the love of a father. Derek was disqualified because of the help from his father but he did cross the finish line. The finish line was more important than winning. We are running a race toward Jesus. We’ve already won because we have Jesus as our Savior, but our race is never over until we get to the finish line in Heaven. Our heavenly Father is helping us to run the race. He gave us His Holy Spirit to help us on our way. We just need to keep our eyes on Jesus because;

 **We can never know Jesus enough!**