

The 'Stepping Stones' Project

Stages Overview

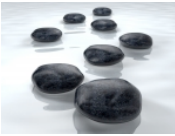


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The ‘Stepping Stones’

For each of the following stages, both parents and the church will intentionally prepare themselves and the child to reach the desired spiritual goals. Parents can do this through the developing of intentional family faith time together with their child, taking advantage of informal opportunities for discussion, and through the celebrating of each stage achievement with them. The church will assist by providing parents with training and resources necessary to help their children reach each goal. The church will also seek to hold celebration activities related to each stage.



Stone #1

Parent Dedication

This is the initial commitment involving Stepping Stones for parents as they vow before God and the congregation to take seriously their God-given responsibility to pass on their faith to their child.

The parents will affirm the following:

- They have chosen to live with the commands of God on their own hearts.
- They agree to accept the responsibility to be their child’s primary faith trainer and to do their best, with God’s help, to impress the truth and love of God on them.
- They will endeavor to introduce their child to Jesus Christ through love, word and deed.
- They desire the accountability and assistance of the congregation to carry out this task.



Stone #2

Respect for the Word of God

The Bible is God’s special book which tells us about Him and His love for us. It is to be treasured and understood to be authoritative concerning life and doctrine. This understanding must be established early in life as foundational to all spiritual development. Family and church must model this understanding and reinforce it through teaching.

The church will celebrate this event with each child during Promotion Sunday with the presentation of their first ‘real’ Bible as they enter the elementary school ministries of the church.

Parents are encouraged to emphasize the significance of this event. One way to do that would be to celebrate with them by taking them to choose

their own special Bible book cover. It can also be reinforced by holding their child accountable for their treatment of their Bible and to encourage them to bring their Bible consistently to church with them. Parents will need to model these behaviors in front of their children.



Stone #3

Personal Faith Commitment

The desire of parents and the church is to see each child place their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord and to begin a lifelong growing relationship with Him. This faith should continue to grow as more Biblical truth concerning Jesus Christ is understood and applied to their lives. The church will consistently present the Gospel to children through its regular children's ministry and especially emphasize the gospel during Vacation Bible School. Parents should use their Family Faith Times and informal God Moments to seize opportunities to discuss salvation with their child. The church will provide resources and training for parents to equip them to do so.

Parents and the church should celebrate with the child who receives Christ as Savior. When a child comes to faith in Christ, the parent should communicate that to the church or visa versa, depending on the circumstances. One possible way for the family to celebrate is to mark their calendar for a yearly spiritual birthday party for the child, inviting those who played a part in their faith. The church will celebrate by acknowledging faith commitments and presenting follow-up literature for the child.



Stone #4

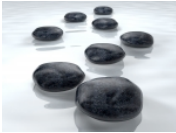
Preparing for Adolescence

The journey toward adulthood can be a tumultuous time for parent and child. There are elements of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual change to be experienced and this journey is made best with the loving support and direction of parents. The adolescent will seek out an understanding of their identity, independence, and intimacy.

- Identity—Who am I? What am I good at?
- Independence—Am I capable to make my own decisions?
- Intimacy—Who really loves me?

Finding the answers to these questions can drive teenagers to emotional highs and lows and even erratic behavior. Parents and the church need to support and unconditionally love each child as they explore the answers to these questions.

The Bible has answers to each of these questions being asked by those entering adolescence. There are many good resources that can be used in Family Faith Talks or even informally with children. The church will seek to make a list of helpful resources available to parents. Parents should celebrate this stage with their children, acknowledging their journey toward adulthood. Taking a special trip with just their same sex parent, allowing time for conversation and questions can be a memorable time in the life of the child. During this time, the parent can communicate their love, support, and willingness to be open and honest in answering any questions their son or daughter may have. The church will celebrate this stage through a special initiation activity for those entering the middle school youth program of the church. A teen Bible is also presented during Promotion Sunday for those entering the sixth grade.



Stone #5

Commitment to Holiness

The early years of the faith journey are often strongly connected to the faith of the parents. At some point during adolescence, the teen must choose to make their faith their own. They must begin to feed themselves spiritually and develop the habits necessary to grow, independent of others. This decision to set themselves apart for the Lord and to consistently seek His way for them can protect them from many of the heartaches that often accompany adolescents and their parents. Choices in media, relationships, hobbies, habits, friendships, and any other areas are affected by a decision to give Christ first place in their hearts. Holiness is not only an act of obedience, but also a natural result of the work of the Spirit in the life of an individual.

The church will spend significant time in teaching from Scripture what God desires for each one to do and be. In addition, parents should address these issues with their teens through formal and informal discussion times. Parents should also encourage their teens to seek out other adult mentors for godly advice and direction.

The youth ministry of FBCA will seek to provide or participate in events that will challenge each student to commit to holiness. As their teens make this commitment, parents should seek to celebrate this decision with them. One possible celebration is to allow them to choose an object to serve as a reminder of this commitment such as a purity ring, plaque or other such item. Personally engraving it with the date of commitment could serve as a life-long reminder of their commitment to holiness.



Stone #6

Passage to Adulthood

Many cultures around the world have a significant event, which when achieved, marks the entrance into adulthood. With adulthood comes all of the responsibilities and benefits of success as well as bearing the natural consequences of poor choices. Unfortunately, American culture has mostly done away with these rites of passage that delineate entrance into adulthood. As a result, many teens have excused their own immaturity, avoided accountability, and delayed financial independence from parents. Helping teens identify when they and others see them as adults can encourage responsible planning and decision-making as well as motivate them to look forward to ‘leaving the nest’.

Parents must help their teens get ready for adulthood. This preparation includes helping them understand the biblical roles of men and women, understanding relationships and marriage, learning to use their spiritual gifts to serve, and even learning the basics of running a household. Parents should also celebrate the passage to adulthood with their teens. Whether through a significant party celebration or trust for an independent trip, it should mark a significant change in relationship between parent and child. From this point forward, I may advise you but ultimately you must decide and bear the consequences of your decisions.

The church will seek to provide resources and training for parents to assist them in helping their teens transition into adulthood.



Stone #7

The Launch to Independence

Leaving home for college or to enter the work force can be equally exciting and traumatic for young adults. Even well prepared young people can experience anxiety at the prospect of being responsible. Parents and the church must seek to prepare them for the launch to independence. From issues such as defending their faith, choosing a church, managing finances, choosing a career path, and finding a life mate are just a few of the many challenges to face young adults. Parents and the church can partner together to prepare young adults for each of these challenges.

The church will spend significant time with juniors and seniors in the area of apologetics, preparing them to answer the tough questions they will be confronted with in college. The church will also seek to train its senior high students in being a godly mate. Parents should be aware of what is presented at the church and seize every opportunity for discussion in informal conversation. Parents should actively plan time to prepare their

young adults in life skills (finances, household skills, basic car maintenance, evaluation of churches, etc.)

The church will recognize achievements during Graduation Sunday. Parents are strongly encouraged to celebrate their independence by passing on their blessing to their son or daughter. By doing so, they promise their continued prayers and love as they venture out on their own. One possible way to make this blessing tangible is to write out a letter of blessing and mount it in a frame for them to take with them as a reminder even while away on their own.



Other Vital Stones

Participating in the Lord's Supper

The bread and the cup of communion are such significant reminders of what Christ has done for us. They serve to hold us accountable and also to motivate us to worship and serve. This practice is a memorial specifically for those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ. We must actively prepare our children to understand and participate in this ordinance.

The children's ministry will take some time to instruct children in the significance of the Lord's Supper. Parents should also take the opportunity to explain and answer questions that their child may have about this practice. The church will seek to compile a list of helpful resources to assist parents in preparing their children to participate in the Lord's Supper.



Other Vital Stones

Obedience in Baptism

Making a public declaration of faith through water baptism is an important event in an individual's faith journey. It can also serve as a time to testify to family and friends who do not know the Lord. It is important for the church and parents to challenge their believing children to declare their faith publicly. We also believe that the decision to be baptized should come at the initiative of the individual, and should be seriously considered. The topic of baptism will be discussed within the youth ministry. Parents will want to monitor their children's readiness for baptism and be available to answer any questions they may have.



Other Vital Stones

Pursuing Church Membership

Being committed to a body of believers through church membership has many responsibilities and benefits. Accountability and edification and service are all a part of God's tools for bringing about spiritual maturity in us. The youth ministry will present instruction on the basic doctrines and beliefs of the church, as well as the requirements and responsibilities of church membership. Parents should see church membership as an important step in the spiritual growth of their children.