

7th Grade STEP-UP Milestone

"Where do I fit in?"

*Discovering Your Identity in Christ &
Stepping up into the Teenage Years with Faith*



"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Romans 12:2

PARENTS of TEENS - You're Not Alone!

A Call to Parents - "to partner" & "to take on"!

Welcome to parenting a growing teenager! Whether this is your first go-around with a teenager in your house or not your first rodeo, we know that these years can prove to be challenging. But we also think that these years can also be, and are meant to be, deeply encouraging, joyful, and richly fulfilling as well!

This packet is an extension of hope, help, and **partnership from HFFBC to your family**. This is us, the church at-large and student ministry of the church, reaching out to you and letting you know that you are not alone in the raising up of your child to be more like Jesus, and that we desire nothing more than to come alongside you and invest in your son or daughter's spiritual journey, and in your spiritual journey as a parent of growing children. We hope you as the parent and your child will dive deep into the life of the church and take the chance that Jesus is all of who He says He is and that He has deep and meaningful plans for your life. We pray that you will take advantage of the opportunities and resources that God has gifted us with here at HFFBC to care for you and your family.



But this packet is also meant to challenge and encourage you **to take on the responsibility of the primary role that you play in the spiritual upbringing of your children**. The Bible teaches that parents are the primary spiritual caregivers of their families (see Deut. 6) and that the role of the father and mother in the spiritual growth and development of their child cannot be understated. While it is the temptation to outsource the spiritual growth of your child to the youth groups, the Sunday School classes, to the small groups, or the 1-on-1 mentoring that will be provided to your teenager in the coming years, please do not forget that you are the most important spiritual voice in your family and for your child. Pray with and for them, lead Scripture times with them, take them with you to serve, and pour into their lives deeply the truths of the Risen Savior.

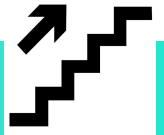


This packet includes several items that we hope will encourage you in both ways (partnership with the church & taking up your parent responsibility). May God bless you richly in these years. We look forward to seeing you often!

In Christ,

Steven White
Pastor of Student Ministries

I. The Transition to the Teenage Years



The teenage years are full of transitions! As you embark on this journey into the teenage years, these are three big transitions you as parents and students will face:

1. Developmental Transitions - ME

As you can imagine, kids are developing a lot during these teenage years! Growing taller, learning knowledge of specific things, developing a heart and passion for specific things, etc. Physically, mentally, emotionally and psychologically **YOU** are developing into the individual person that you will become for the rest of your life. This is deeply important! Erikson's Stages of Development teaches us that from age 12-18 teens begin to develop a sense of self and personal identity. The big question becomes for a teenager - "Who am I?"

Questions a student will be asking about developmental things:

- **Who am I? What are my gifts? What are my strengths/weaknesses?**
- **Do I have unique worth? Do I have anything to contribute? What am I passionate about?**

2. Social Transitions - ME & OTHERS

But it is not just you individually who are changing and developing during these years, but it is you in relationship to everyone and everything around you as well! Kids are learning how they individually and uniquely relate to world around them. How we learn to live in relationship to other humans around us and to the world around us, will prove vital to how we live out the rest of our lives. The next big question then becomes for a teenager - "How do we live together in this world?"

Questions a student will be asking about social things:

- **What kind of person will I be? Kind or mean? Loving or hateful? Generous or greedy? Hard-working or lazy? Live by my own values or my parents' values?**
- **Will I fit in with those around me? What kind of friends do I value or want?**

3. Spiritual Transitions - ME & GOD

Lastly, as has been widely noted, the teenage years are critical when it comes to whether or not a life of faith will be maintained or left behind. It is often during these years that we decide how much we want God to play a role in our lives.

Questions a student will be asking about spiritual things:

- **Who is God? Is He real? Do I desire to know Him? Does He desire to know me?**
- **Why do bad things happen in the world? Is there hope? Is there eternal life?**
- **Do I believe? Do I desire to be part of His people? Do I want to follow Him?**



What the Bible Says About These Transitions:

At HFFBC and within our Student Ministries here at HFFBC, we believe the Bible has much to teach us about the developmental, social, and spiritual challenges of these formative and transitional years. The Bible teaches us that before each of us were born, God knew us (see Jeremiah 1:5) and that He knows us deeply! (see Psalm 139). Our truest identity comes from knowing the God of the Universe, who created all things and who created you individually, uniquely, and particularly. Ephesians 1 teaches us that our truest identity is found “in Christ”, who “chose us before the foundation of the world” (v. 4) to the “praise of His glorious grace” (v.6). Additionally, each of us are uniquely created and have all been given gifts that suit us particularly and to be used for others (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12). We have deep, intrinsic worth; we have God-given passions; and we each have things to contribute to the world that nobody else can, because we are each uniquely and individually made for deep purposes that God intends to show us and work out in us over the course of our lives. Our understanding of ourself and our deep intrinsic worth comes from seeing how much God sacrificed (His own Son Jesus!) to be in relationship with each of us personally.

Therefore, the Bible also teaches us that we were given these gifts and passions to use not for our personal gain, but for *others*, because we were made to live in relationship to one another and to be in fellowship with others (see Genesis 2 and Acts 2). As Christians, we are the body of Christ and each have individual gifts and functions that contribute to a larger whole (see 1 Cor. 12). Therefore, we *need* one another and must seek out friends and people to live in relationship with, to spur one another on to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24). We each get to choose *how* we live in relationship to one another, but the Bible implores us to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 19:19). While we live in a sinful world where much of our interactions with others will be difficult and broken and often painful, God shows us in the Scriptures that a taste of the future heavenly fellowship is made available to those who trust in Him in the Church. And that even though there are persecutions and troubles that will come to those who trust in Him, Jesus calls us to “love your enemies” (Luke 6:27) and to “bless those who curse you” (Luke 6:28). Our relationships with others is to be defined by deep love, out of the love Christ has shown us.

And so then the Bible teaches us that God is seeking out friendship and relationship with each of us. He desires to be in our lives and for us to spend eternity with Him (John 3), and He desires that all people be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). He works all things together for good in His loving, sovereign plan. Jesus Christ is God in flesh who came to take away the sins of the world, which He did on the cross. God is real, and He has made a way for us to know Him - in Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

HFFBC Student Ministries

Our Purpose Statement:

*“To partner with families and students in
knowing Jesus,
growing to be more like Jesus, and
going to serve and tell the world about Jesus.”*

A visual way to view this **know, grow, go** purpose and progression in student ministry is through the **head, heart, hands** visual. It is our goal and purpose here at HFFBC to develop full-person disciples of Jesus Christ, who are healthily balanced and prepared to leave home with a lifetime of genuine and bold faith in Christ ahead of them.



Our Vision - what we want things to look like if God blesses our efforts:

“Our vision is for this generation’s students to come together at HFFBC and then become the next generation’s Church and culture leaders, who are characterized by their **deep love** of Jesus, their **joyful obedience** to His Word, and their **missional living** in His world.”

Our Mission - what we’ll do everyday to advance the vision God has given us:

“Our daily mission is to **invite** students to know and experience God in Jesus, to walk alongside those students in **love**, and to **instill** in them a lifelong love for His Word and His world that would then **compel** them to participate in God’s mission of redeeming all of life back to God through Jesus.”

The Emphases in HFFBC Jr. High Youth Ministry



The emphasis specifically then in our Jr. High Youth Ministry here at HFFBC is 2-fold:

1. To nurture the **heart love** for Christ that has been developed through the years. The emphasis of our children's ministries (from birth through grade 6) to this point has been primarily focused on sensing security, experiencing faith, and developing relational faith.* But if this has been missed or not well-developed in a kid's life, then this is still our first priority in Jr. High - to help kids see Jesus clearly and fall in love with Him! If kids already do love Jesus and have a heart for Him, it is still our primary role to further nurture and develop that love during these important teenage years. A major and primary part of this is offering a safe, loving, and intentional space for Jr. High students to meet openly to discuss faith, have fun together, learn to pray, and to ask questions.



2. But the second emphasis is for beginning the intentional and pointed effort to develop the **head knowledge and understanding** of a student with regards to the Biblical storyline (Genesis to Revelation), theology and doctrine, and how that intersects with the modern world. So out of our purpose statement then, the **primary two emphases of Jr. High Youth Ministry are "**Know**" (developing head knowledge & understanding) & "**Grow**" (continuing to foster and nurture a heart love for God).



**See article "The Stages of Spiritual Growth" by Judy Bryson in Christianity Today (2009) and Lifeway's "Levels of Biblical Learning"*

***While opportunities for "Go" (the "hands" part of the "head, heart, hands" image) will certainly be given in Jr. High, developing the heart and the head is the emphasis so that true "Go" opportunities and experiences can be lived out primarily in the Sr. High ministry years.*

II. The Opportunities for Jr. High Students

Jr. High Wednesday Night Youth Group (grades 7-8)



What is it? The Jr. High Youth Group seeks to provide a loving environment for students to grow in their knowledge (both with their minds and their hearts) of God, his Word and his glorious call on our lives. We strive to provide a place where Christ is exalted in the hope that students will trust him, join with him both in his death and his true and everlasting life. We pray that, by the Spirit of God, the young people we interact with will be shaped more and more into the image of Christ daily and that they will bring God's love in Christ to a world in need. After the 6:03@6:30 time, we have a time of teaching of God's Word and break down into small groups to discuss and apply the Word of God to life. Our night usually wraps up with a time of fellowship in a game or two.

When & Where is it? 6:30-8:00pm each Wednesday (September to June) in the Jr. High Room.

What's the curriculum? We use *Truth78* curriculum (formerly called *Children Desiring God*) and cycle through the following specific yearly teaching themes:

- *Teach Me Your Way: A Study for Youth on Surrender to Jesus and Submission to His Way*
- *Your Word is Truth: A Study for Youth on Seeing All of Life Through the Truth of Scripture*
- *Abiding in Jesus: A Study for Youth on Trusting Jesus and Encouraging Others*

Truth:78

How do you teach? We use a mix of formal teaching, small group interaction, monthly Q&A times, and monthly prayer times at the monthly Haystack Missions Nights.

Who leads it? Tom Nicholson is our Jr. High Ministry Director and he has a wonderful team of Jr. High Youth Mentors who minister to the students faithfully each week. See the welcome letter for more info on who these people are for this year!

Youth Sunday School (grades 7-9)



What is it? This class is for Jr. High students and High School freshmen and is designed to give them a core understanding of the Story of redemption in the Scriptures, comprehensively from Genesis to Revelation. It is also the hope that the older students (9th graders) will take up the leadership mantle during their last year and help facilitate the conversations each week. We stick our noses deep into the Bible each week, have group discussions, and have fun learning about the Bible together! Donuts are provided!

When & Where is it? 9:15-10:15am each Sunday (September to June)
in the Sr. High Room!

What's the curriculum? We use *The Gospel Project for Students* which walks through the entire Bible, Genesis to Revelation, in 3-years.



Most weeks we also watch videos that have been made available by *The Bible Project*, which are 5-8 minute videos that give short, yet deep and rich, summaries of every Bible book. They also have thematic videos and videos that help in understanding how to read the Bible. This is great for visual learners. I encourage you to check them out for your family at www.thebibleproject.com.



Who teaches it? John-Anthony & Amy Simmons, alongside Pastor Steven, primarily co-teach the class each week, though several other youth mentors and adult leaders in the church step in and out to help teach throughout the year.



johnanthony@clearvictory.org
amysimmons76@comcast.net
603.997.6397 (John-Anthony cell)

Retreats



Retreats are offered for Jr. High students twice a year as a chance to “get away” and to connect with Christ and one another in a new rhythm. It is a chance for students to change their pace, to individually encounter Jesus in a deeper way, and also to serve and have rich fellowship with one another. Below are the retreats we offer each year for our Jr. High Youth Ministry:

Jr. High Fall Retreat

3rd weekend in October (Friday-Saturday) at Camp Sentinel
in Center Tuftonboro, NH

Purpose: A service retreat designed for fun & fellowship-building.

Jr./Sr. High Winter Retreat

3rd weekend in January (Friday-Sunday) at Camp
Brookwoods in Alton, NH

Purpose: A fellowship retreat designed to build unity between our youth groups, have fun together, and to grow deeper in love with Jesus.



Mission & Service



Mission & service opportunities are offered for Jr. High students at various points through the year for all students, and then as things for students to work up to as well. See below for information!

Local Missions Service Projects

These are designed specifically to bless the local area in which we live (the Seacoast region extended). These mostly consist of one day or half day service times that make a tangible, visible difference in our communities and that build relational bridges with those outside the church. **These are open & encouraged for all Jr. High students to take part in.** These could consist of a number things, depending on the year but each year though we will definitely, at the least, gather a group to serve alongside Operation Blessing in their annual "One Day to Serve" day in Portsmouth, NH.

Regional Ministry "Go" Trips

These are designed to go one step further in intentionality and geographic reach from the local projects. These are overnight trips that are service-oriented but have clear evangelism and Gospel-sharing times built into them. These stay within the Northeast region of the U.S. and are for students entering grade 9 and older. Therefore, when students are in 8th grade they can begin looking into, applying for, and preparing for any spring or summer regional mission trips that HFFBC offers. In the past we have taken teams to Boston, Portland, ME, and New York City.

Summers



Summer Gatherings

are also offered to Jr. High students, starting right away as incoming students prepare to begin 7th grade. Summers are times for rest and a change of pace. Student Ministry takes a hiatus in the summer from our Wednesday evening programming, but we do intentionally have several points of "connection" we wish to maintain throughout the summer. We usually try to plan one event per month in the summer to stay connected with one another.

Below are some of the events we have done in the past. The dates and events for this year's "Jr. High summer gatherings are included on the **Summer Connection Card** you received at the "Step-Up Celebration" or are also available online. Contact Pastor Steven or the Jr. High Ministry Director for more info.

- Cookout & Games
- After-Dark Game Night
- Hampton Beach Fireworks & Beach Games Night
- Outdoor Movie Night
- Mt. Major Hike



Summer Sunday School

You're invited, as always, to take part in adult summer Sunday school classes that will be helpful for you as you build new relationships and friendships in the world ahead of you. Students in grades 7+ are all invited to come be part of the adult Sunday School classes being offered throughout the summer. Keep an eye out for the offerings this summer!



III. The Invitation from the Church to You



Therefore, the church here at HFFBC encourages you (both students and parents) to jump into all that God has in store for you in these exciting teenage years. Take advantage of what our church here at HFFBC can offer your kids during these important and formative early teen years, both on Wednesday nights, Sunday mornings, and in other things throughout the years.

Students, it is our sincere hope and desire that as you enter into Middle School and then High School, as your life gets busier and freer, and as the temptations and allures of the world will become more present and easily accessible in your lives, that you will choose to stick to Jesus, to follow Him, and to jump into our community here at HFFBC and trust that the Lord will grow and shape you into His image more and more.

Parents, it is also our sincere hope and desire that you encourage your kids to jump into our fellowship and community here for young people, that you will lean on the church for guidance, community, encouragement, challenge and correction, and spiritual resourcing. May you trust and allow the church to shepherd your children to be more like Jesus, allowing them the freedom to grow as they gain independence and seek to find their own identity for the first time. But also, parents, it is our *prayer* that you also do not rely on us too much - but that you take up the mantle of spiritual oversight of your family and that you gently, yet boldly, guide your children towards Jesus in your home life. We invite you to all our church has to offer to adults to help you learn how to best do this and not feel like you're doing this all on your own.

So our challenge and invitation to you is this - take a chance on Jesus (that He is who He says He is) and on His instituted vessel, the church, to do and be for you what it is meant to be and do - to shepherd and lead you towards the Risen Christ.

During these 7-8th grade years, we invite you to *renew* your mind, be *transformed*, *question*, and *discern* God's will (Romans 12:2) that you may find Jesus to be worthy and your all-in-all.

