

Child Dedication

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What is child dedication?

Dedication of infants (and older children) allows parents to publicly dedicate their child to the Lord acknowledging that the child ultimately belongs to God and parents are the important stewards of the life of that child. It is also an opportunity for parents to indicate their intention and plan to rear their child for God's purposes in and through the child, and to call for the congregation's support in doing so. As such, dedication is about the parents as well as being about children.

What are its biblical foundation and precedents?

Human life is a gift from God and begins at conception.

- "Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from Him" (Psalm 127:3 NLT).
- "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jeremiah 1:5 NIV).
- "You are the one who put me together inside my mother's body, and I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me. Everything you do is marvelous! Of this I have no doubt" (Psalm 139:13-14 CEV).

In response to God's gift of children, His people have honored Him by dedicating their children to His purposes. The example of Hannah dedicating Samuel:

- "I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord" (1 Samuel 1:27-28 NIV).

The example of Mary and Joseph dedicating Jesus:

- "When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord" (Luke 2:22).

What is the difference between child-dedication and child-baptism?

Child-dedication is not waterless baptism. Typically, those churches which practice infant baptism don't practice child-dedication and those churches which don't practice infant baptism do practice believers' baptism (usually of much older children/adults). In either case, baptism is a sacrament/ordinance while dedication is not.

What commitment do the parents make in the dedication?

1. Do you yourself know you are saved through faith in Christ, and not through works?
2. Do you realize this is not a saving event and that this child will have to accept Christ as his/her own saving-Lord when old enough to do so?
3. Will you covenant with God to give back this child to Him, so that, if He sees fit in His Providence to call this child home to Himself, you will not complain against Him, or if in adulthood he/she is called to a form of special Christian service, you will not stand in his/her way, but will encourage him/her?
4. Do you realize this is a covenant with God to raise him/her in the fear and admonition of the Lord, to pray for him/her and with him/her, to keep him/her in worship and relationship with God's people in the church, to be faithful in home life and to do your utmost to lead him/her to a saving knowledge of Christ?

What statement do the parents make?

Understanding the definition (see above) and commitment (see above) of child-dedication, the parents will write a brief statement of commitment which they will read publicly at the dedication of their child.

What Commitment does the congregation make?

We, the body of Christ, have heard your commitment to God.
We rejoice in your desire to be wise spiritual stewards
of the life He has entrusted to you.
Accordingly, we commit ourselves:
to pray for you for wisdom, patience and endurance;
to model before you those same qualities;
and to encourage you when your hearts are weak,
your patience is thin, and your wisdom seems lacking.
May God's Kingdom advance through you and the life of your child.

What is an example of the prayer of dedication? (usually by the pastor)

"Our Father God, we praise you for your greatness and your goodness. Your awesome greatness results in life as perfectly designed and precious as this little girl/boy. Your awesome goodness results in allowing these parents and grandparents to have (child's name) in their lives.

Merciful and Gracious God, look with favor on this little girl/boy that she/he may know the security of unconditional love in her/his home and in your eyes, that your Spirit will early and powerfully draw her/him to yourself in saving grace, and that her/his heart and energies will seek only your will all the days of her/his life.

Bless and grant her/his parents special insight into this little girl's/boy's constitution and needs. Knowing there is not another like her/him, may they sensitively follow your Spirit as they love her/him, discipline her/him, lead her/him to her/his high-calling as your child in this world.

Father, respond in your grace to the requests of these parents and forever richly bless (child's name)."

A possible liturgy at the appropriate time in the public worship service:

(Parents are pre-screened as to their relationship with Christ, their understanding of child-dedication and their written dedication statement.)

- The leader (pastor) invites parents and children to the front as an explanation of child-dedication is given.
- The leader asks the commitment questions of the whole group.
- Each parent/couple reads his/her dedication statement
- The leader takes each child in arms and prays him/her or prays collectively for all the children calling each by name.
- The congregation responds in unison stating their commitment (see above).

What do you do if the parents are not believers?

What do you do if only one parent (married or unmarried) wishes to dedicate a child?

What do you do if grandparents wish to dedicate a child (when the parents either don't care or are opposed)?