

Infant Dedication

It's exciting whenever a new child enters a family. There's no greater moment when parents sense that children are a gift from God. In these joyful moments, pastors have the privilege of sharing how parents can express their full appreciation to God through baby dedication.

Those who desire to dedicate their children or infants do so as an act of consecration of themselves and their children to the glory of God. Dedicating a child or infant is not a waterless baptism. It does not save the child or add one thing to the child's spiritual standing before God. Every child, whether dedicated or not, must at some point, receive Christ as Lord and Savior themselves if they are to be saved.

Parents who choose to dedicate their children are doing the following. First, they are recognizing that the children are the



Lord's, on loan to parents for a time. As Christians, we understand that all we have has been given to us from God. What we have

is not ours. It is His. We will answer to Him for how we have managed the gifts He has entrusted to our care. This includes our children. Dedicating children is an act of humble worship, as we acknowledge His complete Lordship over all we are and have.

Second, *parents who bring their children for dedication come asking for God's*

blessing on the children's lives. Just as the people brought their children to Jesus so that He might touch them and bless them, we seek His blessing on our children's lives. Dedicating children is an act of prayer, as we ask for His blessing.

Third, *parents are making a sacred vow to bring the children up in the training and admonition of the Lord* (Ephesians 6:4). This is a serious thing, as according to Solomon, "It is better not to vow, than to vow and not pay" (Ecclesiastes 5:5). *When parents stand before the Lord and His church to dedicate their children, they are publicly vowing to train their children in the ways of the Lord.* This is far more than a



one-time religious experience. It is more than promising to bring the children to church while they are young. It is a vow to live a Christian life as an example to the children, teach the children the Word of God, and lead them to faith in Christ. Since it involves a life-long commitment to be godly parents, and since it involves the children's souls, dedicating children is a serious step.

Fourth, and perhaps the most overlooked aspect of a child dedication service, is the commitment made by the local church. While the responsibility to raise children in the Lord rests squarely on the shoulders of parents, the church, as a community of believers, shares in the responsibility.

The congregation pledges to support, encourage and hold parents accountable to their vow to raise their children in the ways of the Lord.

WHAT DO WE DO?

Dedication services are not private. They take place in one of the regularly scheduled worship services of the church. Family and friends (including children) are invited up onto the platform and are presented to the congregation. The pastor will say a few words about what we are doing and why. A charge is given to the parents, after which the pastor will ask the congregation if they will pledge themselves to be a support for the family.

The pastor will then pray over the family. A certificate of dedication will be presented to the parents. At this point the dedication portion of the service is concluded.

WHAT AGE CHILD MAY PARTICIPATE?

We suggest that dedication be limited to newborns through six months. An older child could become confused by thinking that this ceremony signified a salvation experience, rather than a dedication ceremony.

WHO MAY BRING THEIR CHILDREN FOR DEDICATION?

Not everyone desires to have their children dedicated. It is a personal decision. However, there are those who *should not* bring their children for dedication. Parents who are not believers should not because they will be making a vow concerning the upbringing of their child that they cannot keep. Those who have no particular commitment to the church shouldn't bring their children for dedication either, since raising a child in close association with the

church is a vital part of raising a child in the ways of the Lord.

When a child has one parent who is not a believer and one who is, the believing parent may desire to bring the child for dedication. While this is good, the parents should both understand that for the non-believing parent to stand in a church service and make a vow to raise the child in the Lord would be hypocritical, and therefore not a good idea.

Understandably, this is a delicate issue. We do not want to exclude anyone, but if the purpose of the dedication service is understood, we would hope that unbelieving parents would ask themselves a couple of questions.

The first might be: *"Why do I want to dedicate my child to the Lord Jesus Christ if I do not want to dedicate myself to Him?"*



Secondly, *"If I do want to dedicate my child to Jesus Christ, why don't I dedicate myself to Him as well?"*

Questions regarding this sensitive issue and further counsel regarding how to handle the situation may be discussed with a pastor.

SINGLE PARENT POLICY



Whenever a child is born out of wedlock, baby dedications become a very delicate issue – for while we applaud the single parent for having

the baby and not aborting, and while we do not pass judgment on the single, supporting parent – as a church we must be careful not to appear to condone what God forbids i.e., having children out of wedlock. We believe that unmarried parents do not set a Christlike example by living together. Therefore, unmarried parents will be advised to separate or wait until they are married to dedicate their child.

Under certain circumstances, single parents are allowed to participate in the infant dedication. We prefer to do single parent infant dedications in private. Single parents who are currently living a Christ-like life are welcome to dedicate their child to the Lord. The accommodations for single or unmarried parents will be considered on an individual basis, so please contact us using the information above for an explanation of guidelines.

PRAYERFULLY CONSIDER THESE THINGS

Most likely, you are reading this because you are a parent and are considering bringing your infant for Christian dedication. It is our hope this pamphlet has been instructive in helping you understand and subsequently decide what you should do next. If you have further questions or would like to schedule a dedication, please fill out an Infant Dedication Application and return it to the Welcome Center or the Church office. May God bless you and your family as you seek and serve Him.



A Guide To Infant Dedication



Evangel World
Outreach Center
5100 W. Diversey
Chicago, IL 60639
773/286-0767