

Dedication of Children



"Jesus took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them."

Mark 10:16

The Teaching of Scripture

The Responsibility of Parents

"These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children."

"Talk to them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up."

Deuteronomy 6:6, 7

"Train up a child in the way he should go and when his is old he will not turn from it."

"And, fathers, do not exasperate your children (by your inconsistency in discipline) but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." **Ephesians 6:4**

The example of Hannah and Samuel, Mary and Joseph and Jesus

"In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. And she made a vow, saying, "O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servants' misery and remember me, and not forget your servant, but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life....And she said, "...I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. 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. And he worshipped the LORD there." **1 Samuel 1:10, 11, 26-28**

"And 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**

The word of the Apostle Paul to Timothy

"But as for you, continue in the truths that you were taught and firmly believe. You know who your teachers were, and you remember that ever since you were a child you have known the Holy Scriptures, **which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.** **2 Timothy 3:14, 15**

We believe that children are important. As Christians, we believe that all we have belongs to the Lord. This includes our children. They are not ours, but have been entrusted to us for a time. As stewards, we are responsible to raise them, nurture them, instruct them, and prepare them for life. This means that we will tend to their physical, emotional, and intellectual needs, and most importantly, we will be concerned for their spiritual development.

One day when parents tried to bring their children to Christ, apparently the disciples thought their Master should not be bothered by these little ones and they discouraged them from coming. However, Jesus rebuked his disciples and said, *“Allow the little children to come to me and do not forbid (or discourage) them; for of such is the Kingdom of God.”* (Mark 10:14) It goes on to say in the text, *“Jesus took them up in his arms, put his hand on them, and blessed them.”* This is the pattern we choose to follow in presenting children to the Lord. This is not a ritual, but indeed, there is something precious, wonderful and powerful that occurs when hands are laid on a little one, a prayer is prayed and a blessing is spoken.

Along with this action of the minister, the entire family of God is involved. As Christians, we are not to live solitary lives. Our lives are lived out in connection with other believers. They are to offer support – to pray for, to encourage, to admonish us to live godly lives for our own sake and for the sake of our loved ones. In a dedication service, other believers are reminded of the obligation they have to help families to raise children whose lives will glorify the Lord.

The greatest concern, however, in the dedication of children is that the parent realizes his/her responsibility before God. One should not go through this ceremony without serious thought about what one is saying and vowing before the Lord to do. Scripture says it is better not to make a vow than to make a vow and not keep it (Eccl. 5:5). Parents, as you bring your child to be dedicated to the Lord, this is what you should be affirming in your heart:

1. We commit ourselves first of all to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
2. We commit ourselves to pray daily for His direction in our lives and in the life of our child.
3. We commit to read His Word regularly and teach our child the truth of that Word in our home.
4. We will seek to lead our child to a personal faith in Jesus Christ as soon as he/she is ready.
5. We will provide an example to our child in our own church attendance and in serving the body of Christ.
6. We recognize that this child belongs to the Lord and his/her fulfillment will only come as he/she experiences His love and finds His will for their life.

“Do not be quick with your mouth. Do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it.” **Ecclesiastes 5:2-4**

The Dedication of Children by Believers

“The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.” Psalm 24

1 Samuel 1: 19 to 28 relates the story of the birth of Samuel and his subsequent dedication to the Lord by his mother Hannah. There are important concepts to be gleaned from this passage with regard to the idea of the dedication of children to the Lord.

First of all, Hannah was a barren woman. Peninnah, the other wife of Elkanah, had several children. Hannah bore a social stigma for having no children. Barrenness was viewed in that day as a judgment of God. She also experienced the ridicule of the 'rival' wife. She proceeded to pray at the tabernacle and seek the Lord for the blessing of a child. She promised that if the Lord were to grant her request that she would respond to his gracious gift by returning the child to the Lord all the days of his life for the Lord's service.

The text goes on to say that the Lord "remembered" Hannah when the child was conceived. "Remembering" in this sense, in the Old Testament, has to do with, not merely recalling to our mind or simply thinking of someone again, but rather the setting of one's affection upon an individual and acting graciously toward that one who is in a state of desperation. (God "remembered" Noah as he and his family were on the ark in the midst of the flood waters. Gen. 8:1 He remembered the children of Israel enslaved in Egypt. Ex 2:24, 25)

From this we conclude that not only Hannah's child but every child is a gracious gift of the Lord to the parent. Hannah said, "For this child I prayed and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of him. Therefore", she continues, "I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the lord." Conception is not simply a natural process but one that sees the creative work of God in the beginning of a life and an eternal soul. That knowledge of the creative work of God informs us that the child is not our own. The creation, the child in this case, belongs to the Creator.

The most important concept of stewardship is that all we have ultimately is the Lord's.

Our-children, as well as our possessions, are God's and He entrusts them to us that we might be faithful stewards of that trust. Hannah says, "as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord." We might turn that around in realizing that the Lord has lent children to us as parents for a time, not only to love and enjoy, but to rise to be responsible and faithful servants of the Lord. In dedicating a child we recognize that they really belong to the Lord and they are given to us for just a short time. We are required to be faithful stewards.

Parenting is a process of letting go. Too often as parents we make the mistake of trying to hold on to our children as though they were ours. We should dedicate them to a young age realizing that the sovereign Lord might call them back to Himself (Job 14:5) or to His service in any place, at any time.

Samuel was taken to the temple at the age of four to be given over to the work of the Lord. Jesus was circumcised at the age of eight days according to the law (Lev. 12:3). That was the occasion in which the child was named. The naming of any child in Scripture seems to have great significance. According to the Law, the presentation of the male child was on the fortieth day in Israel. Luke 2:22 tells us that the days of Mary's purification, the forty days referred to in Leviticus 12 (having to do with post-natal bleeding and a cleansing of the system), were completed and that Jesus was taken to the temple and presented to the Lord. There does not seem to be any precise age therefore to dedicate a child. In the book of Exodus (13:2, 12) it says: "Sanctify to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel...it is Mine ... You shall set apart all that open the womb."

Luke 2 is the primary New Testament text related to the act of dedication. We do not do this as a fulfillment of the law and the Old Testament code. We do it because it was modeled in the life of Jesus. When Jesus was presented at the temple there was powerful confirmation by the prophetic word of Anne and Simeon. They were not clergy, simply devoted worshippers and servants of the Lord. The same Spirit of prophecy may minister to our children when they are brought for dedication.

There is no conclusive Scriptural evidence that Christian parents must dedicate their children. Rather there are principles that point to the "rightness" or wisdom of such an act.

God's covenant people have always had the practice of bringing the child before the Lord to present him or her to the Lord. In doing so parents commit themselves to a pattern of raising their children. The dedicating of a child is an act of the parents. The child may be completely unaware of what is taking place (even being fast asleep). In truth, this is a dedication of the parents. They dedicate themselves to the task of raising this child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They acknowledge that they are ultimately responsible for the training of their child- not the school or the church. They will stand before Christ one day and give account of how faithfully they have transmitted the faith to their child.

The Parent is making a vow to bring up their child in the ways of the Lord. The making of a vow to God is a serious matter. It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not keep it. (Ecclesiastes 5:1'-5)

Much of the church baptizes children soon after birth. The Roman Catholic tradition carries out this act in order to deal with "original sin", a doctrine we hold in common. Although Christian churches agree with the idea of original sin (ps. 51:5) it is the solution or response to that original sin that differs. The question is, does baptism of the infant erase original sin allowing the child who is baptized to enter the glories of heaven while the child that remains unbaptized faces either eternal punishment or some kind of state of limbo? The only reference to the death of a little child in Scripture seems to indicate that the child is taken into heaven (2 Sam. 12:22, 23).

Water baptism should follow after repentance as Peter stated on the day of Pentecost. "Repent and be baptized." The command implies that baptism is a conscious act that one voluntarily enters into as a sign of his commitment to Christ and entering into the covenant. That being said it must be added that the Reformed tradition of infant baptism is entirely different from the Catholic tradition. Here baptism has nothing to do with the cleansing of original sin and a sacramental efficacy of that act but rather it is the equivalent of circumcision in the Old Covenant symbolizing the entrance of the child into the "Covenant

Community." This idea of bring our children into the realm of covenant and the subsequent blessings of the children would be unclear, but now they are holy."

(I Cor. 7:14) Holiness here refers not to cleansing of sin but to their being set apart in some way.

Although we believe baptism should be reserved for a time when the individual makes a conscious decision to follow Christ we also believe in this important concept of the covenant community. The church is the people of God, his family, those who are set apart for a special purpose. We serve the Lord not individually but as part of this company. We have obligations to one another and benefits to enjoy as part of His church. We want our children to be brought into this arena where they will be influenced toward holiness. Thus, a public act of dedicating our children makes the church aware of their responsibilities in helping to nurture these little ones in the things of God. We want the blessings of the covenant to come to their lives and so we set them apart and pray to that end.

Questions about dedicating children:

Does the proper dedication of a child improve the likelihood of that child receiving the Lord, walking in His ways, and finding the will of God?

God answers prayer. God moves in on all the territory you dedicate and surrender to Him. He is "able to keep that which we have committed to him against that day".

Does it insure his salvation?

No, nothing except that child's decision to follow Christ guarantees his or her salvation. But dedication and all that we covenant to do in this act will influence and affect the child to make that commitment.

What about "god parents"?

Many times the choosing of god parents is done as just an honor to a good friend. There is no spiritual implication. It ought to be, that these are people who would pray for and be concerned for and committed to the nurture of the child in spiritual things.

Questions for parents to ask:

How are you as parents preparing for the birth of your child?

Between conception and birth how is the woman taking care of herself in body and mind? How is the husband treating his wife during the time of her pregnancy?

The evidence certainly indicates that the newborn is greatly affected by the emotional and physical health of the mother and even the attitude of the mother (which is affected by the father). Prayer, worship and Scripture reading can affect the child even before they can speak - even while in the womb.

Are you willing to not only love your child but to bring correction and discipline to their life?

There are parents who wait far too long to discipline their children.

We recommend not only a reading of Proverbs and all that it has to say about discipline but also the help of writers like James Dobson. His book Dare to Discipline is immensely practical, plain and helpful in balancing love and discipline. The parent who does not provide discipline does not truly love his child.

Are you concerned and desirous to see your child make a commitment of his life to the lord, receiving him as his/her personal Savior?

Children are able to understand the love of God and the message of forgiveness and receive the lord at a very early age - even 3 or 4 years old. Teach your children the Word of God. Read them Bible stories. Pray with them. Help them memorize it.

"Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against God." Psalm 119

Baby Dedication Guidelines for Special Circumstances

We will work with families with non-traditional family structures - such as single parents, divorced parents, and unmarried couples living together. It is not Gracepoint's stance to judge your particular relational circumstances - they are of course, your choice; but we do strongly uphold the Biblical standards for marriage as well as believing that God's design for raising children includes both a father and mother.

Therefore, we have allowances for public baby dedications to include those in non-traditional families, but we retain our strong support of Biblical marriage.

For married couples living together: If the couple is committed to Christ and His Holy Word, please complete the application and an appointment will be assigned to meet with one of our pastors to arrange for your child's dedication.

For divorced/separated parents: The parent seeking to dedicate his/her child may complete the application and an appointment will be assigned to meet with one of our pastors to discuss the dedication of your child. It is recommended that you contact your ex-spouse, to at least let them know of your intention and possibly include them in the process of the dedication.

For single mothers/fathers: A single parent who is committed to Christ and His Holy Word and desires to dedicate his/her child may complete the application and an appointment will be assigned to meet with one of our pastors to discuss the dedication of your child.

For unmarried couples living together: The parent(s) must complete the application and an appointment will be assigned to meet with one of our pastors to discuss the options of dedicating your child which may include a private dedication. As a church, we retain a boundary that does not permit both unmarried parents to participate in the dedication on the platform. We love you, but cannot condone the practice of living together out of wedlock. In order for both parents to participate there must be a commitment to one's partner in a marriage relationship. We are certainly available should you desire to take the step of marriage and will counsel you toward that end.

PLEASE FILL OUT AND RETURN THE FORM ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE, AND YOU WILL BE CONTACTED TO SET UP AN APPOINTMENT WITH A PASTOR.

Parent's Affirmation:

We have read the Dedication of Children brochure and desire to present our child/children to God. By His grace, we pledge to be diligent to fulfill the listed responsibilities. Please do not make arrangements for the dedication until after you have met with a pastor and your date has been approved.

Father's Name (please print)

Father's Signature

Mother's Name (please print)

Mother's Signature

Address

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Are the parents (mark all that apply)

- Married Divorced Separated Cohabiting Unmarried Other

Please supply the following information for the Certificate of Dedication:

Child's Full Name (please print)

_____ Boy Girl

Date of Birth (month/day/year) _____

Dedications are held on the 3rd Sunday of the following months.

Please check which month and service you prefer ✓

Jan ____ Mar ____ May ____ Jul ____ Sep ____ Nov ____

Service: 9am _____ **11am** _____

Once you have met with a pastor, you will receive notification from the church office to confirm date of dedication.

If you've previously dedicated a child here at GGF, please list their name, and the year of the dedication:

To be completed by church office only:

Appointment with pastor: _____ Pastor's Approval _____
(name and date)

Comments: _____
