

PARENT/CHILD DEDICATION CLASS

PARENT'S GUIDE



WELCOME

Thank you for joining us on your parenting journey.

A baby!

What joy, excitement, anticipation!

What responsibility, challenge, cost!

We are excited that you are taking part in a Child dedication service and this class is provided to help you understand the purpose of the dedication service and share our perspective on Christian parenting.

Ice Breaker: Share about your family, any existing children, and your experience in the church.

A Parent/Child dedication is made of several important ingredients.

First is the recognition that the child you hold is not yours, but God's.

*"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth."
Psalm 127:3-4 (NIV)*

*"For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will
praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works,
and that my soul knows very well." Psalm 139:13-14 (NIV)*

The first thing we need to know is that Parent/Child dedication...

- Is not a **salvation** issue
- Does not **replace** baptism
- Is an acknowledgment of God's **Sovereignty**
- Is a response of **thankfulness** for God's gift
- Is a commitment to **godly** parenting
- Is a reminder of the church's **responsibility**

The Parent/Child dedication is a two-part event.

1. **Child** Dedication – choosing to “set apart” your child to the Lord.
2. **Parent** Dedication - a commitment to raise your children according to biblical principles.

We practice a ceremony called a Child Dedication. There are many instances in the Bible where parents dedicate their children to the Lord.

Question: Can you think of any examples of baby dedications in the Bible?

Old Testament Examples

“The Lord said to Moses, “Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal.” Exodus 13:1-2 Cf. Exodus 13:14-15 (NIV)

“You must give me the firstborn of your sons. Do the same with your cattle and your sheep. Let them stay with their mothers for seven days, but give them to me on the eighth day.” Exodus 22:29b-30 (NIV)

“The first offspring of every womb belongs to me, including all the firstborn males of your livestock, whether from herd or flock... Redeem all your firstborn sons.” Exodus 34:19-20 cf. Deuteronomy 15:19-20; Numbers 18:15-18 (NIV)

The Example of Hannah

“And she made a vow, saying, “LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.” 1 Samuel 1:11 (NIV)

*"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 worshiped the LORD there." 1 Samuel 1:27-28 (NIV)*

New Testament Examples

The Example of Jesus

*"When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons"."
Luke 2:22-24 cf. Ex 13:12; Judges 13:5,7 (NIV)*

Question: Why do you want to dedicate your child?

A COMMITMENT TO GOD'S PARENTING PLAN

Following the examples in the Bible, the parents who choose to participate in our Child dedication are presenting their infant or child to God and to the church publicly.

By doing so, you are **promising** to raise them in the Christian faith by personally modeling its values and by encouraging their family to be active in the life and witness of the local church.

You are acknowledging your **need** for God's wisdom, guidance and strength in your parenting.

You are affirming the **commitment** of your heart to follow Christ and obey His Word.

You are **surrendering** yourself to honor God by being a faithful steward of the gift He has entrusted to you.

Therefore, a child dedication is, in reality, a Parent/Child dedication. The dedication service is really more for the parent than for the child. They will never remember it, but hopefully you will never forget it.

Another important aspect of the service is the church recognizing and committing to their role in **supporting** each family.

The congregation will be asked to commit to providing for the spiritual nurture of the child and support for the parents. They will be challenged to pray for the family and to encourage them through their parenting journey.

God has given you a gift! But this gift is also a responsibility and a challenge, encouraging your dependence upon Him day by day. A child can bring you to your knees like nothing else in life.

You may be thinking, "I do not know if I understand what God expects of me or if I can do all He would require."

In His wisdom and love, God provides a way and gives us the strength to do it.

THE GOSPEL

The first step to becoming the parent your child needs, is to acknowledge your need for a relationship with God and to trust in Jesus Christ for **salvation**.

The Bible is clear about this:

"...for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23 (NIV)

We are **separated** from God because of our sin, but because of His amazing love, God sent His Son Jesus to earth, to live and die in our place.

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8 (NIV)

All He requires is that we **believe** in Him. Believe that when Jesus died on the cross for your sin, past, present and future. He completely paid for your sin penalty.

We cannot work our way to heaven. We cannot earn our way to heaven. Jesus did EVERYTHING that is required for us to go to heaven when we die.

Do you believe that?

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (NIV)

Without a relationship with Him, we cannot hope to **parent** well.

This is the first step.

Question: Can you think of any verses in the Bible that talk about a parent's responsibility?

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children.

Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates." Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NIV)

Question: Discuss your observations.
What commands does Moses give to the Israelites regarding their parenting.

OUR JOB DESCRIPTION

1. Love **God**

We need to live well, so that we can **model** a life which is worthy of example for our children.

"Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Deuteronomy 6:5 (NIV)

Decide now to love Him and put Him first. It's your best chance for success.

2. Know His **Word**

The Bible has everything that we need to know to be **successful**.

If you don't have a grasp on God's word and His direction for parenting, then you're in the right place.

The church is the perfect place to begin to learn how to hid God's word in our heart.

*"These commandments that I give you today are to be **on your hearts**."*
Deuteronomy 6:6 (NIV)

You are to provide spiritual and moral training for your child according to God's Holy Word.

The Bible is filled with specific instruction and guidance for parents.

It challenges us to love and honor each other, to affirm and value our children, and to discipline and train them in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

Invest some time each day reading about your role as a parent.

The first phrase says that this is a "**commandment**".

It's our God given responsibility to raise our children the way that God has instructed.

How well do you know His word?

3. Live His Word

God desires that you develop a relationship with Him so your child can see, understand, and embrace a relationship with Him.

Our children are watching all of the time, and our **our actions** will speak much louder than our words.

The Bible tells us to teach our children.

“Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:7-9 (NIV)

Think about some possible modern-day equivalents of commands in the above verse that we could do in our families.

We are to “impress” on them and “talk” to them about the Bible.

We are to “tie” the commands on our hands and “bind” them to our foreheads.

We should “write them on the doorframes” and “gates” of our houses. They will also be a visible testimony to our neighbors.

*“Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.”
Deuteronomy 4:9 (NIV)*

It is parents' responsibility to **model** a godly life, continually seek after Christ, and encourage their children to do the same.

"He said to them, "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law" Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

Deuteronomy 32:46 (NIV)

Remember, God has no **favorites**.

Everyone must individually come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The primary parental responsibility and greatest fulfillment of parenting is seeing faith in Christ embraced by our children.

BREAK

GOD'S ORDER FOR THE FAMILY

Read Ephesians 5:21-6:4 and make some observations.
Be ready to share them with the large group.

Ephesians 5:21-6:4 gives us God's framework for the family and the blueprint for successful godly homes.

First, the husband is called to be the head of the home exemplifying unconditional **love** for his wife.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself... However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself..." Ephesians 5:25 (NIV)

"Has not the one God made you? You belong to him in body and spirit. And what does the one God seek? Godly offspring. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth." Malachi 2:15 (NIV)

On the other hand, wives are called to **respect** their husbands, submitting to his loving leadership.

"Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything." Ephesians 5:22-24 (NIV)

This is all done in a **oneness** relationship under God.

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Ephesians 6:21 (NIV)

A solid godly marriage is God's design for parenting children.
While single parents can be successful, God's design is the ideal.

Finally, children are called to view their parents as the God-appointed leaders of the home, and to respectfully **obey** both their father and mother as they lead everyone in spiritual growth.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Honor your father and mother" — which is the first commandment with a promise - so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." Ephesians 6:1-3 (NIV)

Discipline and Training

The scriptures clearly teach that children are **sinful** from birth.

"Surely, I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."

Psalm 51:5 cf. Rom. 3:23 (NIV)

Babies may look cute, but it won't be long before you see evidence of their sin nature. The first time they tell you "**No**" is a definite wake up call.

"Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it." Proverbs 22:6 (NIV)

"Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far away." Proverbs 22:15 (NIV)

"Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish them with the rod, they will not die." Proverbs 23:13 (NIV)

"Discipline your children, and they will give you peace; they will bring you the delights you desire." Proverbs 29:17(NIV)

Fathers are given the **primary** responsibility for discipline and training.

He is to be the spiritual leader who initiates spiritual conversations and leads the family as they learn to follow Jesus.

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Ephesians 6:4 (NIV)

"Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged."
Colossians 3:21 (NIV)

"He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect." 1 Timothy 3:4 (NIV)

Nurture **faith** in your children.

- Let your home be **filled** with love, laughter, prayer, and song.
- Tell your children that God **loves** them and has a plan for their lives.
- Let Jesus name be heard **often** in your home.
- Read great stories of the **Bible**.
- Make **prayer** a practice at mealtime, bedtime, and other times each day.
- Pray **daily** for the salvation of your children at an early age and for their lives to be lived wholly for Jesus Christ.

Make a commitment to take your children to church and let them grow up worshipping with you and seeing you serve.

Your role as a parent exceeds that of any church, school, or any other sphere of influence.

God has commanded you, as the parent, and you are the one that will be held responsible.

"Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation." Joel 1:3 (NIV)

RELY ON GOD

Once you have experienced forgiveness and received the gift of new life in Christ, only then will you have a new **capacity** to lead, love, and live.

But parenting is still a marathon.

For those of you who are single parents, you will need a **double** dose of God's strength.

Remember that you are not alone.

"He is a Father to the fatherless and a defender of widows." Psalm 68:5 (NIV)

It will be even more important for you to connect to the church, develop meaningful relationships and find a mentor or a friend who can support and encourage you.

Remember Timothy in the New Testament. He is probably the product of a single parent home, since there is no mention of his father, and he turned out great!

"I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also."

2 Timothy 1:5 (NIV)

THE CHURCH'S ROLE

When our church comes together for a Child dedication, we are not simply celebrating the gift of a child and the commitment of a parent.

We are embracing our **responsibility** to support you as a family by teaching God's Word, serving you in love, and whenever possible, encouraging your child to follow Christ.

Our commitment to children and student ministries provides opportunities for spiritual and emotional growth.

Lean on the church, family and friends as you strive to walk this journey to please your heavenly Father. A Child dedication service can be a time of renewed commitment to God and the church.