

Child Dedication

The New Testament has no record of any children dedicated in the early church. The account of Jesus' dedication recorded in Luke 2, was different however, in that it fulfilled the requirements of the Old Testament Law. This does not mean that children should be neglected as Jesus blessed the children.

Reason for Dedication

Firstly, it is important to give thanks to God for the creation of life, especially regarding the baby. *Secondly*, we call upon the parents to publicly dedicate the child to the Lord and to commit themselves to raising the child in the fear of the Lord, along with the help of the local congregation. *Thirdly*, you must pray for the child, often with the laying on of hands. Parents also need prayer that they will receive strength and grace to raise the child in the right way. *Fourthly*, through this prayer the congregation often stands as a sign that they will also help to support the parents in raising this child.

The Dedication service

The Dedication service for the child normally combines with the main worship service. This is so that the whole church family can become part of this dedication and so that any pre-Christian family and friends can become exposed to the worshipping community. There they will hear the gospel, in a non-threatening way.

The actual dedication service may be quite short, especially if held regularly, but it is often good to have singing, various readings and short talks on the family, with the family standing at the front of the church. This dedication service is a serious occasion, but be relaxed about it, especially if the baby cries.

A sample vow for the parents;

Will you (names of parents inserted), promise in the presence of God and before the people of this congregation, seeking with God's help to raise (name of baby) in the fear of the Lord? As this child grows up will you teach and train him/her, even by your own example, the Christian way and whatever God may require of this child in years to come, will you freely release him/her into the service of God?

Parents are to answer, 'We will'.

Points to consider

1. What about a baby conceived out of wedlock? Is it correct to give thanks to God in this situation? The thanksgiving is for the life itself and the prayer for the child is still of paramount importance.
2. What about when pre-Christians want their baby dedicated? It is helpful to either have a special service in their home, with invited friends and family, or on the other hand, if the dedication is in a church service, make sure that the vows they make are at the level they can keep. The emphasis should be one of thanksgiving.