

Child Dedication

The New Testament has no record of any children dedicated in the early church like the way we do it in most of our churches today. 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, we give thanks to God for the gift of life, especially for the precious gift of a child.

Secondly, the parents publicly dedicate their child to the Lord and commit themselves to raising the child in the knowledge and fear of the Lord, with the support and encouragement of the local church family.

Thirdly, the church community commits to praying for the child and the family. During the dedication, prayer is often accompanied by the laying on of hands as a sign of blessing and entrusting the child to God. The parents are also prayed for, asking God to grant them wisdom, strength, grace, and guidance as they fulfil their responsibility of nurturing the child.

Finally, by standing together in prayer, the congregation expresses its commitment to support, encourage, and care for the family as they seek to raise the child in a Christ-centred home.

The Dedication service

A child dedication is normally held as part of the main worship service. This enables the whole church family to participate in the dedication and publicly affirm its support for the parents and child.

It also provides an opportunity for family members and friends who may not yet be Christians to experience the life of the church and its worshipping community. In this welcoming and respectful setting, they can hear the message of the gospel and witness the love and fellowship of God's people in a natural and 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 or child) in the ways and love 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.