



Why Do We Dedicate Children?

First off, it's important to know that dedicating children to the Lord is not a practice mandated in Scripture. It is simply an attempt to apply several Biblical principles regarding parenting and church life in a manner that is culturally relevant.

In Mark 10:13-16 we read this story: Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

Because of this passage, we view the dedication of children is a way of bringing them to Jesus for His blessing. An excellent Old Testament example of child dedication is found in the story of Hannah and her son Samuel (1 Samuel 1). Her little boy, while hers as his mother, was completely given to the LORD for His purposes to be fulfilled in his life.

Thus parents bring their children to the Lord—recognizing that they belong to Him—and that they are on loan to them for a time. As believers in Christ and stewards of all that has been given us by God, we know that one day we will answer

to Him for how we raised our children. Dedication, therefore, is an act of declaring Jesus' Lordship over our family.

By bringing our children publicly before the Lord, we are making a vow that we intend to raise our children in the nurture and admonition of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 6:4). For this reason, parents considering taking this formal step of dedicating their children need to consider the seriousness of the commitment. It's a serious time because God expects us to fulfill the vows we take before Him. Ecclesiastes 5:5 says, "Better not to vow than to vow and not pay." Jesus warned His followers about taking frivolous oaths in the Sermon on the Mount.

Understood this way, dedicating our children is not some kind of one time religious ritual. It is a sober dedication of the parents to the ways of the Lord in raising their child. It is an act that initiates a life-long relationship governed by Scripture.

The vow, made to the Lord, is witnessed before the congregation, much like in a wedding. It then becomes the congregation's duty to pray for and hold the parents accountable to their vow in the months and years to come.

What Child Dedication Is Not

Dedicating a child does not make that child a Christian. That's a decision the child will have to make for him or herself when he or she reaches the age of accountability. A dedication service is not a substitute for baptism. Baptism is a step of obedience that believers are to take when they understand and are ready to make their own personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Therefore, we do not believe in infant baptism. Rather, we believe in *believer's* baptism. There is no evidence of the baptism of infants in the Bible.

When, Where, and How to Dedicate Children

The dedication of children is something individual families do in the context of the corporate assembly. That is why at Calvary Chapel we schedule dedications during the second Sunday morning services. Any Sunday will be fine, except for Communion Sunday on the first Sunday of each month.

During the service, we simply invite the parent(s) up to the stage, and then say a few brief words and pray. A dedication certificate is then given to the parent(s).

To schedule the dedication of your child, first read and pray over the passages mentioned in this brochure, and then contact the Calvary Chapel church office to schedule your dedication.

A Final Word to Parents

It's not uncommon for a parent who desires to dedicate his/her child to be married to someone who does not share their commitment to the Lordship of Christ. Since the dedication of children is a solemn vow to God to raise them in the nurture and knowledge of Christ, this places a burden on the unbelieving spouse that they may not be comfortable with.

For this reason, we ask you to consider seriously what you are doing.

What do you believe about God? Why do you want to dedicate your child?

If your spouse has given this to you to read because they want to dedicate a child, but they are unsure of your position in regard to these things, please talk over this issue. It may be that you are uncomfortable making such a vow. If so, and your mate desires to proceed, you might decide to let them go ahead with the dedication while you do not join them on the stage.

Or, it may be that you want to investigate what Biblical parenting is all about before deciding what you'd like to do. If that is the case, please feel free to make an appointment with one of our pastors, who would be happy to help you with any questions you may have.