

Information and Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Baby Dedications

*Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him.
Psalm 127:3 (NLT)*

Baby dedication is a ceremony in which parent formally devote themselves and their child to God, his word and his ways with the prayerful hope that the child will grow to know and follow Jesus. Christians believe that children are a gift from God. It is God, who in his goodness, gives children as a gift to their parents. Because children belong to God and are given as gifts to parents, it is only proper and appropriate that children be dedicated back to God.

Background on Child Dedication

When speaking of child dedication, one of the most common biblical examples is Hannah (1 Sam. 1). Hannah prayed and prayed for God to bless her with a child. When he answered her prayer and she has a son she prayed the following: *“For this boy I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of Him. “So I have also dedicated him to the Lord; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord.”* 1 Samuel 1:27–28.

There are various places in Scripture where we see parents asking God to bless their children (Gen. 48:9; Num. 6:22-27). In *Luke 2:22* we read that Mary and Joseph brought their baby Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem in order to present him before the Lord. In the same way, parents today desire to present themselves and their children before God praying for his blessing.

Moses describes in Deuteronomy 6 God's plan for how a parent should raise up a child. Deuteronomy 6:5–9 states: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates”* (ESV). Parents are to train their children in the ways of the Lord. At the time of a child's dedication, parents are declaring that this is their intention.

Baby Dedication and Infant Baptism

As a church family, we dedicate infants and view baptism as a step that is taken once one is of an age to understand. The clearest evidence that is seen in scripture is of individuals being baptized following their decision to trust in Jesus for salvation (Acts 2:41, 8:12, and 10:47–48). Infants are not yet in a place to understand and respond to Jesus, therefore, we encourage parents to dedicate rather than baptize their children.

Though the dedication ceremony is celebratory and significant, it is not a sacrament and does not impart grace or salvation to a child. Salvation comes through faith in Jesus as one recognizes their sinfulness and need and receives forgiveness through Jesus and his life, death and resurrection (Eph. 2:8-9). It is our prayer that as a child grows they will eventually understand this, respond to Jesus and be saved. During a child dedication ceremony the church prays together towards this end as the child is formally presented and dedicated to God.

Further Questions

What is involved in the ceremony?

The parents stand before the church with their child and are asked to make the following commitments as they answer these questions with “we do”:

- Do you receive this child with gratitude, as God’s gift to you and your family? And do you hereby declare your desire to dedicate yourselves and your child fully to the Lord?
- Do you commit to be parents of personal faith, recognizing your children are more likely to follow God’s path by the model they first observe in you?
- Do you pledge as parents that, with God’s fatherly help, you will bring up your child in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, making every reasonable effort, with patience and love, to build the Word of God, the character of Christ and the joy of the Lord into your child’s life?

Those present including family, friends also have the opportunity to make a commitment to help the parents and do their part as a community to train the child in the ways of Jesus. There is then a prayer over the child. The ceremony generally takes 5-10 minutes.

What are we doing for our child by dedicating him/her?

Dedication is making a public statement to the church, friends and family that you will raise this child in the ways of Jesus. It is about your commitment and desire as a parent to lead your child into a thriving relationship with Jesus. The Dedication ceremony in itself does not save the child as this occurs through the child growing to put their faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Since your child will not remember the ceremony, it is more about the commitment that you as parents and the community around you are making. It is a beneficial and important step to take and our church takes great joy when parents choose to dedicate their child.

Do I need to be a CityLights member to have my child dedicated?

You do not need to be a formal member of CityLights Church to have your child dedicated. We do encourage parents to make sure CityLights is their home church. This matters because in dedicating your child to God, you are stating that you are willing to partner with God *and the church* to raise your child in the ways of Jesus. Before partnering with any church, a parent would be wise to decide if he or she agrees with its beliefs and vision in order to be a fully committed participant in the life of the church family.

To have your child dedicated:

- We ask parents to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- We ask parents confirm that their beliefs align with the beliefs of CityLights.
- We ask parents to be regular and committed to CityLights community.
- We ask parents who are living together and who are not married to take steps to acknowledge and surrender to God's plan for their relationship before participating in a child dedication service.

How old should a child be when they are dedicated?

There are no strict rules for this. Generally, parents will choose to dedicate their child within their first year of life. Often it comes down to practically scheduling a time that works for both family that wish to visit and the church.

What about Godparents?

The Bible does not mention Godparents and having formal Godparents is not a part of the dedication ceremony. It is parents who have the responsibility of raising their child in the ways of the Lord. This being said, some parents will include a couple particular friends or family in the ceremony who will stand on stage with them as witnesses and supporters. These can be people who know the parents well and are Jesus-followers themselves.

What if I am not married but I live with the child's father/mother?

This may be a question that a couple wishes to discuss with a church leader. Dedication is a public declaration that the parents are choosing to raise their child in the ways of Jesus. It is not saving the child and the motivation lies primarily with the parents desiring to formalize their commitment as they align themselves with Jesus and a local church. Therefore, it is difficult for a parent to make this declaration when they are currently not living in obedience to the Word of God. We desire to support parents and recognize that everyone is on a spiritual journey. We know that various people with various stories and backgrounds are a part of our community. In this scenario, we encourage parents to be married and make their union legal before proceeding with the Dedication Ceremony for their child.

Can I as a grandparent dedicate my grandchild?

Yes, if you have full custody and the child lives with you. The person making a public vow should be the child's primary caregiver who is responsible for the upbringing of the child.

What if I am a Jesus-follower but my spouse is not?

If only one parent is a believer, the dedication of the child can be done if the unbelieving parent has given permission.

Should the child be dressed in a particular way?

No. Parents are free to dress their child as they please.

