

VILLAGE BIBLE
CHURCH



DISCOVER PARENT & CHILD DEDICATION

Name:

What to Expect from this Class

DISCOVER PARENT & CHILD DEDICATION

What Is the Purpose of Dedicating Parents and Children?	2
What Is a Parent and Child Dedication All About?	3
Fulfilling the Parent Dedication	4
Fulfilling the Child Dedication	5
What Parent and Child Dedication is Not	12
Common Questions	13



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF DEDICATING PARENTS AND CHILDREN?

Central to our mission here at Village Bible Church is for families to function as discipleship centers, with parents taking the lead in passing their faith to their children. An important step in this process is for parents to publicly dedicate themselves and their children to the Lord.

By dedicating our children to the Lord, we are really committing ourselves as parents to the biblical task of raising them in a way that will be pleasing to God. We are publicly handing our children over to the Lord and to the church, to do everything in our power to instill in the hearts of our children a love for God and for His Word. In return, the church family is given the opportunity to make a commitment to partner with the family in this process.

The tradition of child dedication originates in the Bible. It is based on God's command to the Israelites to consecrate their firstborn sons to the Lord by means of a special ceremony. Hannah brought her son Samuel to Eli, the priest, to dedicate him to the Lord (1 Samuel 1:24-28). Jesus was also brought as a baby to the Temple by Mary and Joseph, to fulfill the Jewish purification laws (Luke 2:22-24)



WHAT IS A PARENT AND CHILD DEDICATION ALL ABOUT?

In essence, there are two dedications happening. First, you are dedicating yourself to be the parent God called you to be. Second, you are dedicating your child to God through several practical commitments that will continue to develop over the course of your child's life.

The ceremony of the Parent and Child Dedication will only be memorable to your children because of the story you will write on their hearts, teaching them to follow Christ. The commitments you make at the ceremony are simply the beginning.

Do you remember your marriage vows, or at least portions of them?

The vows you made to one another were only the beginning. The words you promised are lived out day after day in your marriage. Otherwise, they were only empty words. The same is true with the commitment you make to teach your children to love God with their lives.

Here are the two dedication questions:

PARENT DEDICATION

Will you choose this day to live with the commands of God on your own heart, accepting responsibility to be your child's primary faith trainer and impress the truth and love of God on your child as you live life together?

CHILD DEDICATION

Do you now dedicate your children to the Lord who gave them to you, surrendering all worldly claims upon their lives in the hope that they will belong wholly to God?



FULFILLING THE PARENT DEDICATION

1.

Love the Lord

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart (Deuteronomy 6:5-6).

2.

Love your spouse

However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wide see that she respects her husband (Ephesians 5:33).

3.

Love your children

She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat bread of idleness (Proverbs 31:27).

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).



FULFILLING THE CHILD DEDICATION

Child Dedication Commitments

1.

Recognize your child as a gift

Do you today recognize these children as the gifts of God and give heartfelt thanks for God's blessing?

Children are a heritage.

Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward (Psalm 127:3).

Psalm 127:3 is a Psalm of Ascent, which simply means it was often quoted as Jewish families would ascend to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage. This Psalm specifically speaks of the blessing of a family. The presence of godly children in the home meant security for the parents in old age and hard times. Children are the heritage of the generation to come. Keeping this in mind when raising our children helps us to remember to treasure them but not to spoil them. Responsible children bless the next generations by caring for their aging parents.

Children are a gift

God entrusts parents to raise their children well, teaching them to observe all that He has commanded. Children are literal gifts from God.

Children are His

In 1 Samuel 1:28, God blessed Hannah with a child and she dedicated him to the Lord.

In Luke 2:22, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple to dedicate Him according to Hebrew law.

The ceremony of baby dedication follows in the spirit of these two texts. It is a time where parents decide to commit to raising their child in a God-honoring way.

2.

Intentionally disciple your child

Do you pledge as parents that, with God's fatherly help, you will bring up your children 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 their lives?

Children need parents, not just friends or caretakers. It will take your very best.

The Most Important Thing

For some of you, this is your first step into an amazing adventure that will change everything. For others, this is not your first baby, but another in the journey God has for your family. In both cases, life will change in every aspect. Time will be stretched, and priorities will be increasingly more difficult to maintain. Life will quickly show us what we value as important, simply because we won't have time or energy to do the extraneous things.

In the midst of all the necessary, what is most important?

Introduce them to the God of the Bible and teach them to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and strength.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 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. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

This theme is repeated throughout Scripture. God calls parents to teach their kids the most important thing they could ever learn; to love God with all their heart, soul, and strength.

We all want to provide for our children: good clothes, toys, happiness, family vacations, swimming lessons, sports, careers, cars, college educations, etc. What is the one thing God calls parents to provide? Teach your kids to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, and strength!

How do I introduce my little one to Jesus and teach him to love God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength?

Take intentional steps each week to foster ongoing discipleship

Intentional faith talks

Begin to invest in your baby through intentional faith talks. Faith talks are intentional times set aside each week for conversations around Scripture. While your baby may not engage in much conversation, she will remember the things you teach her.

1. **Bedtime Blessings:** Many age appropriate devotional books are available and incorporate a simple story or Scripture for use before bedtime.
2. **Songs:** Babies and toddlers often learn best through rhymes and songs. Begin investing in your child's spiritual walk through music
3. **Simple Prayers:** Praying over your child cultivates a lifestyle of dependence on God. Teaching your child to pray at the earliest age can begin to frame how he will walk with God the rest of his life.

Capturing God Moments

God Moments will begin to happen as your child begins to communicate. These are informal moments where God is working in her life. As a parent, you can capture these moments and point her toward Christ.

Look forward to significant stages in your child's spiritual life

- Parent and Child Dedication
- Salvation and Baptism
- Preparing for Adolescence
- Purity for Life
- Rite of Passage
- High School Graduation
- Life in Christ

You can celebrate each of these stages as your child passes through them. Helping children understand the spiritual aspects of life transitions can make a big impact.

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6).

This proverb teaches that parenting will require training. This will take our very best.

Proverbs 13:24, 29:17 Proper discipline is crucial to raising godly children.

Ephesians 6:4 Fathers should not provoke their children to anger, but should raise them in the discipline of the Lord.

Proverbs 3:11 A parent's discipline models God's discipline performed in love.

3.

Provide for your child

Do you promise to provide, through God's blessing, for the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs of your children, looking to your own heavenly Father for the wisdom, love, and strength to serve them and not use them?

On pages 89–90 of *This Momentary Marriage*, John Piper describes how it looks for a husband to provide spiritually and physically. He writes:

Spiritual Provision

To provide spiritual food for the family, you must know spiritual food. This means that a man must go hard after God. You can only lead spiritually if you are growing in your own knowledge of God and love for God. If you are feeding your soul with the word of God, you will be drawn to feed your wife and your children.

Gather your wife and children for family devotions every day—call it whatever you want: family prayers, family worship, family Bible time, devotions, etc. Take the initiative to gather them. If you don't know what to do, ask some brothers what they do. Or ask your wife what she would like to do. You don't have to be a loner here. Remember, headship takes primary responsibility, not sole responsibility. The wife, we pray, is always supporting and helping. And she regularly has gifts that the husband doesn't. What women rightly long for is spiritual and moral initiative from a man, spiritual and moral domination.

Physical Provision

The husband bears the primary responsibility to put bread on the table. Again the word primary is important. Both husbands and wives work.

In all of history this has been the case—both the man and the woman work. But their normal spheres of work are man: breadwinner; wife: domestic manager, designer, nurturer.

That never has meant there are not seasons in life when a wife cannot work outside the home or that the husband cannot share domestic burdens. But it does mean that a man compromises his own soul and sends the wrong message to his wife and children when he does not position himself as the one who lays down his life to put bread on the table. He may be disabled and unable to do what he longs to do. He may be temporarily in school while she supports the family. But in any case his heart—and, if possible, his body—is moving toward the use of his mind and his hands to provide physically for his wife and children.

4.

Raise your child in Christian community

Do you commit to share your needs as parents with other members of the body of Christ, in order to receive support and encouragement?

The following is an excerpt from the Village Bible Church Teaching Position called *Why Community?* The full document can be found at villagebible.church/positions.

Every fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ needs to have strong and vital relationships with fellow believers. There is no such thing as a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ who lives in isolation.

Our need for connectedness goes back to the very beginning of the human race. In Genesis 2:18, God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." God Himself is a relational being who lives in vulnerable community with the other relational persons in the Trinity. In Genesis 1:26, God said, "Let us make man in our image." Because we are created in God's image, we also need to be in community and in relationship with others.

Jesus modeled biblical community for us by spending the majority of His time with His disciples – teaching, encouraging, and correcting them. They lived, ate, traveled, prayed, and served together. Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35).

Romans 12:5 tells us, "so in Christ, we (believers) who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." As with our physical body, so it is with the body of Christ – when one part suffers, all suffer. God has designed and gifted our fellow believers in Jesus Christ to perform unique and vital services to help you. Some of these services include being devoted to one another, serving one another, accepting one another, instructing one another, bearing one another's burdens, forgiving one another, comforting one another, encouraging one another, and looking out for the interests of others, just to name a few!

Fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ are in communities where they are both receiving and giving these things to people on a regular basis. Getting to this level does not happen naturally. It is the result of disciplined Bible study, prayer, and caring for one another. Christianity is a team sport!

5.

Pray for the salvation of your child.

Do you promise, God helping you, to make it your regular prayer that, by God's grace, your children will come to trust in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of their sins and for the fulfillment of all of His promises to them, even eternal life; and in this faith follow Jesus as the Lord and obey His teachings?

The following is an excerpt from the Village Bible Church Distinctive called *Sharing the Gospel with Children*. The full document can be found at villagebible.church/positions.

We believe that the most biblical way to enhance a child's passion to find joy in life is to guide them to the One who gave them life (Acts 17:25). The God of the universe—Who had no beginning—must be the central figure in our pursuit of joy: "...for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen" (Romans 11:36).

We are overjoyed with the privilege of joining you as we seek to guide your child to the only fountain that will satisfy them. Our desire is to help create a passion in your child for the fullness of joy that can be obtained only as we bask in the presence of God.

How, then, should we evangelize our children? The answer to this question is not an easy one, but it begins with recognizing and avoiding some of the common pitfalls in sharing the Gospel with children.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- *Complicating the Gospel of Christ*
- *Coercing a profession of faith*
- *Assuming the reality of regeneration and then assuring the child of salvation.*
- *Rushing baptism*

It is not enough for parents simply to avoid these common pitfalls—they must also seek to put into practice the following keys to evangelizing children.

Foundational keys to evangelizing children

- *Setting a consistent example of godliness*
- *Proclaiming the complete Gospel of Christ*
- *Understanding the biblical evidences of salvation*
- *Encouraging possible signs of conversion*
- *Trusting the absolute sovereignty of God*

6.

Remember your child belongs to God

Will you daily remember that your child belongs to God and is loaned to you by God for each day that He gives you the opportunity to be parents and for the joy and the love that your child brings to your home?

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them (Psalm 139:13-16).

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change (James 1:17).

But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God (Mark 10:14)."



WHAT PARENT AND BABY DEDICATION IS

Baby dedication is not infant baptism

History of infant baptism—Infant baptism is practiced in certain denominations. The first record of infant baptism in history, however, occurred two hundred years after Christ.

Meaning of infant baptism—Denominations practicing infant baptism believe one of two things:

1. Infant baptism secures the baby of salvation until she can be confirmed later in her faith with full understanding.
2. Infant baptism indicates that this child will likely become a believer because the parents are actively walking with Christ. In this case, it is done more for a covenant reason than for one's individual faith.

What is the difference between child dedication and infant baptism?

A baby is not able to understand the commitment that is being made; however, we as parents do. It is the faith of the parents, not the child, that is the focus of the dedication ceremony. Therefore, as we dedicate our children to the Lord, we're dedicating ourselves to love, nurture and train them in the principles of Christian living.

We don't baptize babies because we follow the pattern we see in Scripture of baptism being a proclamation of faith by one who has personally accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Very young children cannot make that decision. Baptism is a public testimony of an inward transformation by the Holy Spirit that has taken place in the life of an individual (Acts 2:24).

Salvation happens when a child is old enough to make a decision on his own, and the child chooses to receive Christ. Salvation is not a matter of any good thing a child does; rather, it is a matter of grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). A child receives Christ into his or her life and begins a new life in Christ.

A photograph of a person holding a lit sparkler, with bright sparks and light trails against a dark background. The text 'COMMON QUESTIONS' is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

COMMON QUESTIONS

At what age are children dedicated?

We encourage you to dedicate your baby before the age of six months. Not only does this make the service more comfortable for you and your baby, but it also serves as a good reminder that it is never too early to begin the process of spiritually nurturing our children. However, we also welcome parents with older children who desire to make a public commitment to the Lord to dedicate their children.

Are other participants allowed?

Though it is not required, grandparents, godparents, or older children may join you on the platform. Over the centuries, it has been common for certain persons (typically two) to assist or “sponsor” a child by supporting his or her discipleship. Often it is the godparents who act as legal custodians, should something happen to the parents. The primary function, however, is spiritual.

Can my child wear a christening gown?

Yes, these are often family heirlooms with a meaningful history in the extended family. Christening gowns are certainly not required, however.

VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH



This resource is adapted for Village Bible Church from resources from Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Kingsland Baptist Church in Katy, Texas. Visit www.desiringgod.org, www.hopeingod.org, www.legacymilestones.com, www.legacyblog.org for more information

For more information on Village Bible Church Teaching Positions go to villagebible.church/positions.