

Child Dedication

There are certain very important events in life when significant commitments are made. Because of the nature of these commitments they are made in a public setting and in the presence of God. Marriage is an example of this kind of public commitment. A promise (Or covenant) is made between a man and a woman to love and cherish on another until they are separated by death. Membership in a local church is another example. A promise is made between each of the members of that church family to care for each other and help one another grow in faith. The same is true of the dedication of a child. Promises are made between the parents, the church family and God. In the dedication of a child we are all making a public statement in the presence of God that we have a stake in the development and direction of this child's life. Each of us share a part of the responsibility to see that the child being dedicated grows in a church family that loves Jesus Christ and gives this child every opportunity to do the same.

Child dedication may be confusing to some. As this child is brought to be dedicated to God, we are NOT equating this action with salvation or baptism. We believe that Scripture clearly teaches salvation is a personal response to God's working by an individual. And, baptism is a public profession of that personal act of faith subsequent to salvation. Personal faith in Jesus Christ can only spring from the Spirit's work in the heart of the individual. No one can make the commitment of personal faith for another. Baptism, in the Bible, always signifies *evidence* of that personal faith. That is why Peter calls baptism, "...an appeal to God from a clean conscience." (1 Peter 2:21) Because of the teaching of the Scriptures we do not baptize infants at Faith Community Church and child dedication is not meant to be a substitution for baptism.

There is clear evidence in the Scriptures of parents dedicating children to the Lord. Samuel is dedicated by Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:28. Jesus is dedicated by Joseph and Mary in Luke 2:22. Other important passages to consider are:

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. And you must love the Lord you God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again."

Mark 10:13-16 One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so He could touch them and bless them, but the disciples told them not to bother Him. But when Jesus saw what was happening, He was very displeased with His disciples. He said to them, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I assure you, anyone who doesn't have their kind of faith will never get into the Kingdom of God." Then He took the children into His arms and placed His hands on their heads and blessed them.

Ephesians 6:4 And now a word to you fathers. Don't make your children angry by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction approved by the Lord.

In dedicating a child to the Lord, we are acknowledging God as creator and Lord. Parenting is not possession but a stewardship entrusted by God. The child placed in our care as parents and a church family is given as a trust (see Luke 19: 11-27). Dedication is a very intentional act of faith, surrendering back to God that which is His. (Romans 11:36).

Psalm 127:3 Children are a gift from the Lord...