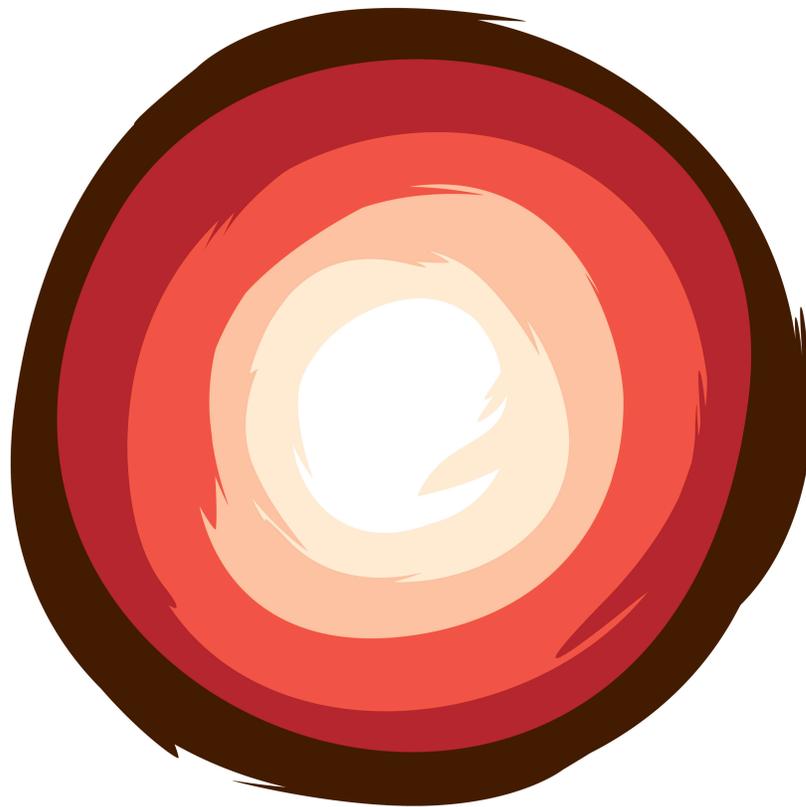


# **Baby Dedication Manual**

**A Renewal of Godly Tradition**



**Epicentre Church**

## **Baby Dedication - A Renewal of a Godly Tradition**

The arrival of a new baby is a time of rejoicing for any family. The newness of life often brings a special freshness toward all of life. Often, during this time, parents want to do something in the church building to celebrate their joy with others and to present their child to God for blessing. The Israelites brought their 8-day-old children to the priest for blessing. Hannah (1 Samuel 1:24-28) brought her long-awaited son Samuel to the priest Eli to dedicate him to the Lord.

- 1 Samuel 1:25b [Hannah] brought the boy to Eli, 26 and she said to him, "As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. 27 I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. 28 So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD."
- Matt. 19:13 Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. 14 Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

The joy of Jesus' birth was shared with the people of God in the house of God. Like most Jewish parents in that day, Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple to be presented to God. Long before this time godly parents presented their children to God. And to this day, parents bring their children to God, asking for his blessing.

Some Christian churches baptize infants by sprinkling them with water. In those churches the covenant of baptism is seen as being similar to the Old Testament covenant of circumcision. At Epicentre, we don't baptize infants. Instead we dedicate our sons and daughters to God.

There are several reasons for this. First, there are no clear incidents of infant baptism in Scripture. Baptism seems instead to be an evidence of Christian faith that one chooses into. Additionally, while some groups suggest that baptism imparts a special grace to children, there is no real scriptural support for this. Finally, in our society, often adults who were baptized as children desire to be baptized again as an expression of their decision to receive Christ as their Savior and Lord.

For these reasons, we choose to encourage parents to dedicate their child to God during a public worship service. During this Christian Dedication service a beautiful and solemn promise is made before God and the Church to care for this child as though it was God's child.

## **Dedicating Yourselves**

As parents presenting your child to the Lord, you signify your own personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You show a desire to see God's will carried out in the life of your child. And you acknowledge your place as stewards and disciples of what really belongs to God: your child.

Dedication means that by word and example, you promise to teach your child to live a holy life and to value the good gifts God has given us. You promise to give your child every opportunity and encouragement to develop into the well-rounded Christian individual God intends him or her to be.

Dedication before God and the Church means that you realize that the Church should have a large part in the spiritual growth of your family. They should know you and your child so they can give prayer support, assist in Bible teaching, and provide opportunities, facilities and workers through which you and your child can enter into the fullness of Christian faith. And that means your giving yourself to participation in your children's spiritual development at home as well as in our Children's Ministries.

To help you in the preparation and understanding of what this entails, we've written the following questions to help you think through the implications of this baby dedication (which we think are simply expressing what it really means to be a Christian parent):

1. Since dedication of children is a Christian act of giving children to God for his glory, the most obvious question to ask is, "Are we Christians?" As a couple standing before God dedicating their child to him in a Christian church, your life should show the characteristics of Christ. Sometimes people bring their babies for dedication or baptism because it is "the thing to do." God is honored by hearts that genuinely desire to please him without regard for what others think. Christian Dedication of babies is for Christian families.
2. The next question is "Are we willing to oversee our child's Christian development? Do we see the primary role of dads and moms as discipling this child whom the Lord has so graciously given us, in the fear of the Lord and for His purposes?" Scripture tells us that we are to train a child in the way he should go (Proverbs 22:6). This includes meeting together regularly as Christians to spur one another on to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:23-24). Dedication of children to God is a promise to model a Christian lifestyle to the children by worshipping with a church family regularly and incarnating Jesus' values in our words, deeds and finances. In a sense, a Christian Dedication of a child is a dedication of the parents to be godly role models.
3. The question which follows this is "Are we serious about this dedication?" Parents should ask themselves if they really want to see their child serve God. Would they like to see their child become a pastor, a Christian businessman, a missionary, who correctly sees that whatever profession God calls them into is an expression of their vocation to serve God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength? When Hannah, the mother of Samuel the prophet dedicated him to the Lord, she promised to give him up to serve God in the temple (1 Samuel 1-2:11). Dedication of children to God means handing them over to Him to do with as he pleases. An act of dedication is an act of faith in God, trusting him to call the children wisely and mercifully and an act of obedience to parenting as God leads, not according to our traditions, culture or habits.
4. A final question to ask is, "Are we, the parents, in agreement on this?" A pastor cannot really dedicate someone else's baby to God, because the baby does not belong to the pastor. The parents have been made caretakers of their baby. Only they can dedicate the child to God. It is important that both of you are committed to this Christian Dedication.

If it is your wish to follow the example of godly parents who throughout the ages presented their children to God in dedication; if you understand that your child is a gift from God and that he will hold you accountable for your child's spiritual growth in Christ; if you promise to pray for and with your child, to instruct your child in the things of God, to teach your child to read God's Word, and to do everything in your power to bring your child to a knowledge of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; if you believe it is a great privilege to offer a child back to the Creator, and wish to stand before God and the Church to dedicate your child to God, then we want to assist you in doing so.

### **Practicals for the Actual Dedication Ceremony**

Pastor John & our Pastor of Family Ministries will ask these questions:

- *Do you covenant before God and in the presence of these witnesses to do everything in your power to raise these babies and young children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to bring them weekly to God's house for instruction and worship and to participate in its ministry to our children? If so, answer 'We will.'*
- *Do you covenant to strive to bring them to an early knowledge of Jesus Christ as a personal Savior? If so, answer 'We will.'*
- *And do you promise to give your child over to God's service, in whatever area He sees a need? If so, answer 'We will.'*

They will ask the church:

- *So that these children may walk in the abundant life that Christ offers, do you as a church covenant before God to be faithful in your calling as members of the body of Christ, to help these parents be faithful to God, and to help teach and train their children in the ways of the Lord so that they might one day trust him as Savior and Lord? If you are willing to accept this responsibility, please respond by saying "we will."*

Pastor John or our Pastor of Family Ministries will ask each family:

- *"How can we pray with you for your child?" Or parents can share what they believe God to do in their child's life?" (Or it may be a promise God has given you for this child). Please make sure this is only 2-3 sentences so that every family has a chance to share!*