



Dedicating Your Child To The Lord

As parents, we come from many different backgrounds. As a result, it can be very confusing as to what we should do when a child is born. Should we have them baptized? Should we have them dedicated? What is right? Although the final decision is ultimately the parent's, here's a brief statement about what we believe at Southside Bible Church that may help clarify the issue.

1. We believe your child is a wonderful gift from God. As big a role as a parent has had in bringing this child into the world, it is a small role compared to the part that God has had. I'm sure that as parents, most of us realize the awesome gift and miracle that a child truly is. We believe we should acknowledge God's gift.

2. We believe your child is unique. For one thing, your son or daughter is a miraculous merging of two persons. Your child is a part of both parents, as well as your families' for many generations back. At the same time, your child is like no other person who has ever been born. God planned it this way and has made your child special, loved your child with a special love, and has a special plan for his or her life.

3. We do not believe baptism, whether it be for a child or an adult, saves a person. That which saves us is a personal faith and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. No one can make this decision for the child (as much as most parents would like to). It must be one's personal desire and decision. When a child or adult makes that decision on their own, with an understanding of all that a decision for Christ brings with it, they are ready for baptism. We recognize and appreciate other denomination's well-intended desire to baptize infants, and acknowledge that some understand infant baptism to be a Biblical expression of the parents' desire to bring their child into a covenant relationship with God. On this issue we respectfully disagree. We find the only expressed form of baptism in the New Testament to be baptism of believers by immersion. Therefore, rather than baptizing infants/young children, we dedicate them to the Lord, expressing the parents' and the church's desire to raise the child up in the training of the Lord to the point when they can make a decision to follow Christ on their own.

4. We believe the parents are responsible to God for how they raise and nurture their child. As parents, God has entrusted this life into your hands. And has called you to love and raise your child according to His plan. Proverbs 22: 6 says, "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Ephesians 6:4 says, "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Colossians 3:20-21 says, "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged."

We raise our children properly when we **teach** them, not just Biblical truths and lessons, but healthy life lessons as well. More often than not, this is accomplished best by example. Do we lie? Do we steal? Do we lose our patience and strike out? Or do we demonstrate patience, hard work, and responsibility?

We also believe that regular family devotions are essential to train up our children in the Lord. We also must take the time to **discipline** our children. God does hold us accountable for the manner in which we discipline, or fail to discipline our children. I Samuel 3:13 says: *“For I (the LORD) told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them.”* Discipline is not for our sake, but for our children’s sake. Some scriptures you may want to look at to help you in your understanding of this principle are: Proverbs 13:24; Proverbs 22:15; Hebrews 12:4-11; and the passages in the paragraph above: Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:20-21. Finally, God has called us to **love** our children. We do this by caring for them, talking with them, sharing with them, touching them in appropriate ways, and showing them that mom and dad love each other too. It’s been said that children spell love T-I-M-E. Spend time with your child, doing things that good parents do for children, and you will find, with very few exceptions, that your child will feel loved and will love you in return. The Bible assumes we will love our children (Matthew 7:9-11).

We believe that these three need to be kept in proper balance. Too much love and not enough discipline, or too much discipline and not enough teaching, or too much discipline and not enough love, throws everything out of balance. The child will either be spoiled or embittered.

We believe that the church has a vital role to play in assisting every parent to fulfill this role. But this can only be accomplished as the parents seek out the help which the church can give. We believe that regularly attending Sunday School is important for the child, but even more important is your regular attendance as parents. As parents, you’ll need support, guidance, wisdom and love to carry out the huge responsibility you have accepted. By being in the church, the child will also find love, friendship and instruction, but it must be a partnership. The church cannot “fix” your child, or make him/her a believer. It is a joint venture, with parents leading the way.

Then, when we have a Parent/Child Dedication, we ask you as a parent to acknowledge God’s gift and His rightful ownership, to dedicate yourselves to Him, and to dedicate your child into His care. We, as the church, will commit to coming along side you and assisting you in the process.

It is a great joy for us to know that you have chosen to bring your child before the church to participate in what we pray will be a very meaningful ceremony. As we enter into child dedications here at Southside, we do so in the same spirit Hannah displayed following the birth of Samuel; *“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.”* I Samuel 1:27-28. Another wonderful image is of Jesus Himself displaying His tender love for little children; *“And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them..”* Mark 10:16

As you prepare for the day of dedication, it is important to know that this is intended to be a significant time both for you and your child. Perhaps eternity alone will reveal the many ways God will use this ceremony in your lives. In preparation for this day of dedication, please set aside time to prayerfully read the verses and passages listed for you below. While these verses do not exhaust all the Bible has to say about child training, they do provide a good overview of your calling. You will also find a list of the type of questions that will be asked during the dedication ceremony.

You are blessed to be *“heirs together of the grace of life.”* I Peter 3:7. Our prayer is that this exercise will not only prepare you for the day of dedication, but also for the years ahead as you seek to be faithful in this high calling of parenthood.

Scripture Verses For Study And Prayer

- Deuteronomy 6:1-9
- Proverbs 22:6
- Proverbs 23:13
- Matthew 18:1-7
- Matthew 19:13-15
- Ephesians 5:21-33
- Ephesians 6:4
- I Peter 3:7

Questions For The Dedication Ceremony

- Do you commit yourself/yourselves to the Biblical training of your child?
- Because one of the greatest gifts you can give your child is a healthy marriage, will you seek to make your relationship with each other the priority God intends?
- Recognizing that God established both the family and the church, and designed them to work as partners in training and service, will you seek to involve your child in the opportunities and ministries of the church?
- Do you commit to praying for your child regularly, and faithfully doing all in your power to lead him/her into a vital relationship with Jesus Christ?
- Question to the church family: “. . . and do you, Southside Bible Church, commit yourselves to ministering to this family, holding them accountable, and to do your part to raise this child in the teachings and service of the Lord, for as long as this family makes Southside its local church home?