



CHILD DEDICATION

Child Dedication is a service where parents publicly commit to raise their child in a Christian home and guide their children toward a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is an act of dedication you make before God, your church and your family that you are cooperating with the Holy Spirit to lead and spiritually nurture your child so they have the opportunity—when they are able—to follow Jesus themselves.

Child dedication is an act of the parents indicating their desire to raise their child as a follower of Jesus.

Here is what we ask of parents who are considering child dedication.

- We ask parents to be actively following Jesus, growing in their relationship with God.
- We ask parents to be sure their beliefs line up with our statement of belief.
- We ask parents to be regular attenders of Real Life's weekend services.
- We ask parents who are living together and who are not married to take steps to acknowledge and surrender to God's plan for marriage before participating in a child dedication service.

We are open to having conversations with you on any of the above statements. If you are interested, contact Rich Evans—our Family Ministry Pastor (revans@reallifecc.org)—or call the Church Office (219) 762-6544

COMMON QUESTIONS PARENTS HAVE

What is the purpose and history of a child dedication?

The scriptural root of a child dedication is found in 1 Samuel 1:27-28, where a godly woman named Hannah prayed year after year for God to give her a child. He answered her prayer and she gave birth to a son, whom she named Samuel. When Samuel was born, Hannah prayed these words:

"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."

In Luke chapter 2 of the New Testament, following the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph took the infant Jesus to the temple and dedicated Him.

In both Scripture passages, the parents entrusted their child completely to God.

The writings of Moses found in Deuteronomy 6:5-9 describe God's plan for how a parent is to raise up a child:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."

One key step in marking your desire to nurture your child in the ways of God is to dedicate him or her to God publically, through a child dedication ceremony.

Does Child Dedication make my child right with God?

No. There is no act we do that makes any of us right with God. We are right with God because of Jesus' payment for our sins on the Cross. Salvation is a free gift and is never earned by any religious act we do. The Apostle Paul says it this way: *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast."* Ephesians 2:8-9

So instead of Dedication doing something for your child, *dedication is an act of the parent* thanking God for the gift of your child, asking for God's help in raising your child and giving your efforts and energies in raising your child back to God. Dedication is your commitment as a parent to make sure your child knows *about* God and is around the people of God learning the things of God (loving God, loving people and serving the world).

Does dedication guarantee my child will be a Christian?

No. *Dedication is your act as a parent* saying you are going to do your best to help your child know and love God. As a Christian parent, it's your job to raise your child in the knowledge and understanding of the Lord. But when your child is old enough, we pray your child makes the decision to follow Jesus for themselves (and we want to help you get them there!) *Baptism* will be the act of your child signifying that they themselves want to follow Jesus.

Is there an age limit for my child?

Since this is an act the parents make on behalf of the child before the child is able to make their own response to God, most parents dedicate their children when they are infants. If you have just begun following Jesus, or have never dedicated your child and would still like them to be dedicated, consider that the age of 5-6 is usually the time they can begin understanding and having their own relationship with God.

I'm not a Christian, but someone in my family wants me/us to dedicate the child. Can we do that?

Since dedication is an act of Christian parents, we don't want to put you in the position of doing something that would be disingenuous to who you are by asking you to partake in an explicitly Christian ceremony. If you need help in talking to that family member and explaining why you won't be doing that, we'd love to help.

We are living together; can we dedicate our child at Real Life?

Not yet. The act of dedicating a child is meant to come out of the commitment a Christian couple makes to live before God as husband and wife. Their willingness to make the commitment to raising their child to become a Christian is meant to come after their commitment to live as Christians.

The New Testament is our guide and authority for what we do with our bodies, our attitudes, our words and our money—in other words, our day-to-day life. Accepting what the New Testament teaches about marriage & sexuality (*see, for example, Matthew 19:4-6, 1 Corinthians 7, Hebrews 13:4-7*) is often a challenge in our culture.

We trust and affirm what the Bible teaches because we trust that God's way of doing life is best and ultimately brings healing and hope to couples, children and families.

We want to help you succeed as followers of Jesus and want your child to know God. Our dream is that you'd realize God's dream, resulting in a healthy marriage. So we'd be honored to help you take the step of marriage when you are ready and then dedicate your child as an expression of your commitment to each other before God. We recognize the sensitive nature of this and would love to talk with you about it further.

Can I dedicate my child if I'm a single parent raising my child by myself?

Yes. If you a follower of Jesus and want to raise your child as a Christian parent, we'd love to dedicate your child. Regardless of what happened in your past, we want to help you move forward in the future. If there is an ex-spouse in the picture, we encourage you to be on the same page about dedicating your child, but we realize this is sometimes not possible. Real Life is committed to helping single parents provide a solid spiritual foundation for their children.

Do I have to say anything publicly when my child is dedicated?

No. The pastor dedicating your child will ask you a couple of simple questions with two word answers about your intent to raise your child knowing about God, but you aren't on a microphone.