

Child Dedication

Parent Dedication – Child Presentation

by David W. Haines

In many believing churches, a service of baby dedication is conducted in which Christian parents publicly present themselves and their children to the Lord. We frequently refer to this service as baby dedication, but I prefer to think of it as parent dedication and child presentation. There are three things that should be understood clearly about this service:

1. There is no Biblical command that such a formal service should be conducted. Having said that however, there is Biblical precedent for presenting our children to God in the case of Hannah and Samuel (1 Sam. 1:24-28) and in the case of Mary and Jesus (Lk 2:22-24). In both cases, these were done in obedience to the Mosaic law but to no such command is enjoined upon New Testament Christians. On the other hand, many Christian parents feel that Hannah and Mary have established a good pattern for them and they want to follow their example. I agree that it is a fitting thing for Christian parents to do and I believe there is a great testimony value to such a service.

2. There is no saving value in this service.

Public presentation or dedication of our children is no guarantee that they will become Christians. Parents cannot transfer their salvation experience to their children. Our children will have to make a personal decisions for themselves when they comprehend the facts of the Gospel

3. There is no magical effect upon our children as a result of public presentation.

Only as parents dedicate themselves to God and the holy task of training their children for Him, can they expect to see positive results. Presenting the child is easy, but dedicating ourselves to the task of being a Christian parent is plain hard work.

MEANING OF CHILD DEDICATION

What does it mean to dedicate ourselves and to present our children to God?

First, it means that you are publicly acknowledging your child as a gift from God and presenting him to the Lord that His will might be realized in his life. Psalm 127:3 declares “Lo, children are a heritage from the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward.” That being the case, our first responsibility is to recognize that our children are lives that God has entrusted to us. It becomes our responsibility to bring up our children in the ways of the Lord and His Word.

Second, Proverbs 22:6 states “Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” If you are to train your children in the fear of the Lord, you must be familiar with heaven’s manual for training children which is God’s Word. In the Word we learn the principles of discipline, instruction, and correction which are essential elements of child training. Timothy had a rich heritage from his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois in that they taught him the Scriptures as a child (2 Tim 1:5, 3:14-15). Is it any surprise that Timothy was saved as a young man? The Apostle Paul addresses the important word to Fathers in Ephesians 6:4 when he said, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

Third, I believe that a service of parent dedication includes an appeal to the church to pray for and with the parents as they seek to live for Christ and to train their children for Him. Every parent sooner or later realizes that parenthood is no easy task. We need to encourage one another, pray for each other, and support one another in those stress periods when our children go through difficult times. There is no easy formula, every child is different, we all need to learn, and how great it is to know that we have praying, supportive Christian friends who are upholding us before God. Parent dedication is not saying, "I have all the answers, or will be a perfect parent." It is saying, "I can't do it alone and need the help of my Christian brothers and sisters – will you pray for me?"

I think you can see from the above that if you, as Christian parents, do not take your responsibility seriously, that there will be very little value in such a public service. However, if you dedicate yourself to God and to the task of raising your children for Him, I believe you can trust Him to save your children and to use them for His glory.

Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them,
for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." ~ Mark 10:14