

IS BABY DEDICATION BIBLICAL? WHAT IS CHILD / BABY DEDICATION?

Baby dedication is a tradition practiced in many Protestant churches that includes an infant or child, parents and/or grandparents, a minister, and church congregation. Much variety is found in this practice, yet baby dedications commonly seek to challenge parents to commit themselves to raising their child in a godly manner, ask for God's blessing upon the child, and ask the church congregation to commit to helping the family by providing a spiritual community to assist in the development of the child.

The New Testament does not include a specific practice or any commands related to a baby dedication. Therefore, it is not commanded or required for the parents of a child. However, the practice can serve a very positive role and be a great encouragement to all involved.

The idea of dedicating a child to God can certainly be found in the Bible. For example, Hannah was a woman unable to bear a child. She prayed for a child and promised to dedicate him to the Lord if He would give her a son (**1 Samuel 1:11**). Joseph and Mary took baby Jesus to the temple for a dedication (**Luke 2:22**), a common practice under the Jewish law.

Common Bible verses heard at a baby dedication usually include **Psalm 127:3** "*Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.*" Another passage is **Deuteronomy 6:4-7**: "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: [5] And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. [6] And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: [7] And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*"

The historical reason behind baby dedication in many Protestant churches emerges from the Protestant Reformation's break from the Catholic Church. Some traditions, such as the Anabaptist movement, rejected the practice of infant baptism, instead only baptizing those who had made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

However, parents still desired to dedicate their children to the Lord when they were born. Instead of a christening service, which might be inappropriately perceived as effecting salvation for a child, baby dedications became common.

Baby or child dedication is a way to commit one's child to God. Parents express their understanding that their children belong to the Lord and that they have been entrusted to raise them well. They express their intent to raise their child up in the Lord, with the hope that he or she will come to faith in Jesus. Baby dedication is also a way for the congregation to join in prayer for the parents and child as well as commit to being a supportive community of faith.

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