

GOD AND *FAMILY DEDICATION*

Frequently Asked Questions



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What is and is not child dedication at SPBC?

At Severna Park Baptist Church, we enjoy celebrating with families the birth of children. The Bible recognizes that children are a gift and blessing from God, not to be taken lightly (Psalm 127; James 1:17). Many families desire to dedicate their child(ren) to God through our church body. Again, we celebrate this opportunity to partner with parents and families in growing godly generations.

At SPBC, we do not endorse infant baptism but encourage immersion baptism. Infant baptism is not wrong per se, but we believe it is incomplete. Essentially, infant baptism is a parent's decision for a child, whereas immersion baptism should be that individual's decision to trust Jesus Christ in saving faith. Therefore, SPBC only endorses child/family dedications.

A child/family dedication is a ceremony of commitment that communicates the parent/family desire to raise that child according to God's purpose for salvation in Jesus Christ and according to God's principles for spiritual growth in the Scriptures. The act of dedication has no saving merit unto itself. However, it is a faith decision of the parents/family to acknowledge God as the Author of life. Further, the dedication is an expression of faith of the parents/family to raise the child in the Christian faith.

Where does the Bible reference child/family dedication?

The Bible does not provide an exact correlation of child dedication as we know it today. However, there are a few examples that provide an example of faith.

- Hannah dedicating her son Samuel to the Lord (1Samuel 1:27-28).
- The Psalmist's declarations (Psalm 22:22; 78:4-8; 79:13; 145:4).
- Joseph and Mary dedicating the infant Jesus (Luke 2:22).
- Jesus' welcome and reception of children to pray over them (Mark 10:11-13).

These examples, among additional biblical references, show us that the act of child/family dedication can be a God-honoring action of faith.

How old should the child be?

SPBC does not have a specific age for a child to be dedicated to the Lord. Generally speaking, most families choose to dedicate their children within the first year or two of their life. Yet, every family is unique in their circumstances and will be considered as ways to biblically encourage and dedicate your family in the Lord.

Can grandparents and/or extended family, or “god-parents”, be involved in the child dedication?

SPBC believes having the support of multiple family members and friends is a gracious gift from God. The act of dedication is not only expressing faith to raise the child in the Lord but is also a public commitment before those you desire to pray for you and partner with you in this role. The Bible does not use the term “god-parents” but, as mentioned, SPBC does invite family and friends to be present at the dedication as a supporting role in your child’s moral and faith development.

As for the actual dedication ceremony, we have found it best that the parents/guardians who are making the public dedication should be the only one’s involved in the ceremony (i.e. “on the platform”). If you have questions, please discuss this further with the Pastor for unique circumstances.

Do I need to meet any requirements for child/family dedication at SPBC?

SPBC looks forward to the opportunity to celebrate your commitment to leading your family in the Lord. In the dedication, you are publicly committing to love God, follow God’s purposes and principles, and are partnering with God’s people to raise your child. The decision to dedicate your child at SPBC implies some sort of relationship to our church body. Therefore, we would encourage you in the following requirements:

- SPBC desires parents to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- SPBC desires parents to be moving toward membership at a local Bible believing church, hopefully with us at SPBC.
- SPBC desires you to be in good standing with the church body and its leadership. In other words, those who may have outward sins that are open and unwilling of repentance are not in good standing. See 1Corinthians 6:9-20.
 - o Parents who are living together and unmarried should take steps to surrender to God’s plan for their relationship before participating in a child/family dedication.
 - o Individuals who have had a child out of marriage should take steps to acknowledge God’s plan for their life before participating in a child/family dedication.
 - o Further, single parents who dedicate their child may not have significant others (boyfriend/girlfriends, etc.) as surrogate stand-ins at the dedication since they have not participated in the covenant of marriage.
 - o Further lifestyle choices, and the like, that are mentioned in the above Scripture passage.

The above statements are meant in love and are open to further conversation. SPBC seeks to honor God in all its services and seeks your good according to His purposes.

What if I am a believer but my spouse is not?

The desire for child/family dedication is a parental act of faith and submission to God’s purposes. It is also a public commitment before those witnesses.

If only one parent is a believer, the dedication of the child can be done *if* the unbelieving parent has given permission. The Bible notes, “For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy” (1Corinthians 7:14).

A parent(s) who has not placed their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord will be unable to participate in SPBC child/family dedication. An unbelieving parent is unable to lead their child to God's purpose of salvation and God's principles for spiritual growth because they have not done so themselves. Our reason is not to be divisive but to remain faithful to the meaning of the dedication. SPBC views this decision as an act of protection rather than rejection so persons are not making a vow to God that they are unable to keep. The Bible says, "It is a snare to say rashly, 'It is holy', and to reflect only after making vows" (Proverbs 20:25). Reference other passages that vows were made without godly intention (Matthew 5:33-37; Acts 5:1-11). In sum, only a Christian believing parent may dedicate a child.

What happens if my baby dies before being dedicated?

This question requires much compassion and sensitivity. Unfortunately, we live in a fallen world that deals with tragedy and death. SPBC believes humbly before the mercy of God that infants who die are received into the presence of God. Infants and many of those with disabilities are not able to comprehend the nature of God and their sin. These are not able to be morally accountable and rely upon the mercy and grace of God supplied in the sufficiency of salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ.

Further on this topic, we recommend a book *Safe in the Arms of God* by John MacArthur.

What happens before and during the actual dedication ceremony?

After your request a SPBC Pastor will contact you to get to know your family and discuss the dedication ceremony.

At the ceremony, you and your child can dress in whatever clothing attire that makes you feel comfortable and is God-honoring modesty. Picture taking is permissible by family and/or friends if it can be done without distraction to the dedication.

We encourage you and your guests to arrive early to acclimate to the campus environment. During the worship service the Pastor will ask the parents to bring their child(ren) to the front of the congregation. The Pastor will share your family and child's name. The Pastor will ask the parents to promise and pledge to honor God's purposes and principles for the raising of the child. Likewise, the Pastor will ask the congregation to commit in its role to be a community of faith to aid in the spiritual development of your family. The Pastor will then pray for your family and present your family with a copy of the words from the dedication and a children's Bible for your family. You will then be seated following this presentation.

What is expected of me after I dedicate my child?

SPBC encourages you to celebrate with family and friends. This is an opportunity to be a Christian witness and share with others the motivation of your family and faith. As a Christian parent, your role to train your child in the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7).

SPBC has some helpful parenting resources that can be found here:

<http://growinggodlygenerations.com/2015/02/23/parenting-in-proverbs-series-links/>.

We pray for your family's legacy and look forward to partnering together to grow godly generations.

Today, on **Date**, Severna Park Baptist Church has the honor and opportunity to share with a family the dedication of their child. The **family name**, dedicates their **child name**.

Each child is uniquely created to reflect and relate to the glory of God.

Psalm 139:13-14 "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well."

~ Share meaning of child's name with Biblical reference and/or family significance. ~

The Psalmist says *"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed are they that fill their quiver with them! They shall not be put to shame when they speak with enemies in the gate"* (127:3-5).

Likewise, our Lord Jesus welcomes children saying, *"Let the children come to me, do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God"* (Mark 10:14).

God gives parents instruction on raising children in the Scriptures:

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

Psalms 78:4, 6-7 "We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments;"

In essence, God wants families to be faithful to God, God's People (church) and God's Purposes (salvation and service). In dedicating **child name**, I will now ask us to make this covenant commitment with the Lord:

Pastor Dave To **family**

- Do you promise to the Lord and these witnesses to provide a Christian home, as both husband and wife and as father and mother, where God's way, truth and life are followed?
 - o [By God's grace, we do!]
- Do you promise to be spiritual guides, praying, teaching and loving your child toward the time for **child name** to personally follow the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord?
 - o [By God's grace, we do!]

Pastor Dave To Congregation

- Do you, the people of God in this church, promise to partner with these parents to provide a godly church home, and a loving environment as friends and neighbors for this family?
 - o [By God's grace, we do!]
- Do you, the people of God in this church, promise to continue teaching the Bible so that this child will never lack hearing the truth of God's Word?
 - o [By God's grace, we do!]

Presentation of Gift or Bible.

Pastoral prayer of dedication and blessing for **Family**.