



birkdale baptist church

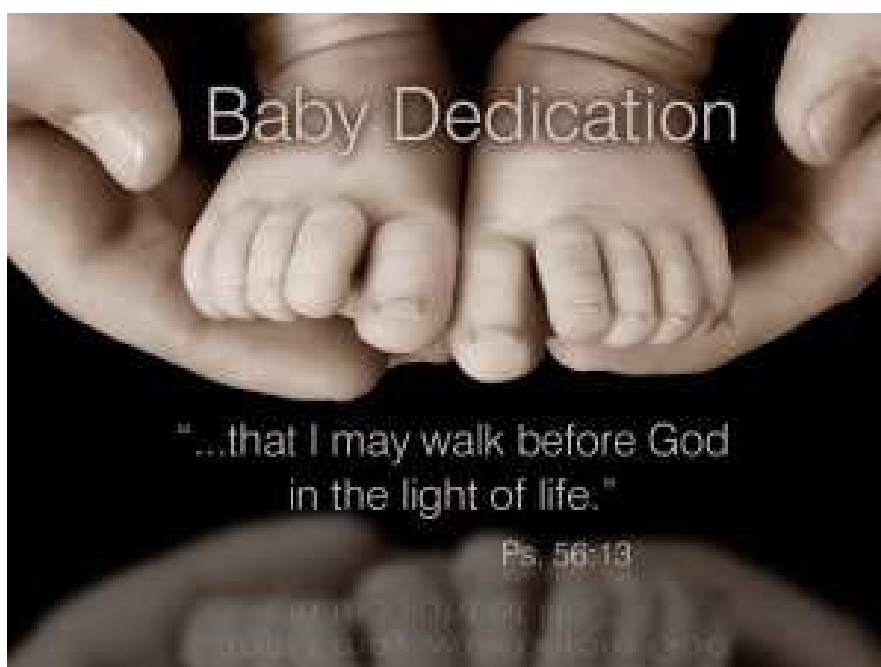


Dedication Information

Acknowledgment: Original Concept – South African Baptist Union

The Dedication Service

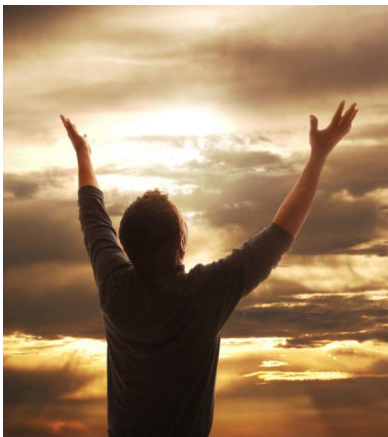
As parents rock their new baby to sleep, hum a lullaby, or just gaze into the little ones' eyes, they are often struck by a sense of gratitude, responsibility and joy. Thoughtful parents realise that they should make a definite response to such an experience, or it may simply fade away with time and nothing lasting will be gained. Those of us who acknowledge God in our lives often feel particularly impelled to make such a response. Our church provides an opportunity for this in what we call the Dedication Service.



This booklet seeks to explain briefly the significance of this practice, in order to prepare you for further discussion with a pastor should you consider such a service.

The Meaning of the Dedication Service

The Dedication Service is an act of worship in which parents invite the congregation and other friends to share with them in a public response to God for His gift of a child. It is a brief but very significant service which is usually conducted during a regular worship service. Although it may vary in details from service to service it always incorporates three basic elements which may be referred to as praise, promise, and prayer for God's blessing.



The Dedication Service Involves PRAISE

A prominent note in the Dedication Service is thanksgiving. In this act we openly acknowledge that God is the maker of all things and the giver of all life, and we thank Him for our child. According to the Bible children are a gift from God, '*a gift from the Lord*' – *Psalm 127:3*. Parents may be the means of transmitting life, but each new life is the gift of

God. In our self-sufficient age we do well to emphasise this fact. The pastor (or someone special to you) will, therefore, lead in a prayer of thanks for the child, for his (or her) potential and for the enrichment he (or she) will bring into our lives and home. This sense of gratitude is the basic motive for a sincere act of dedication. We acknowledge the privilege you have from God to have His child entrusted to you.

The Dedication Service Involves PROMISE

The element of promise is at the heart of the Dedication Service. The word 'dedicate' is derived from the Latin word for *to proclaim* and means *to publicly commit* or *to devote*. Because it is impossible to dedicate anything we do not own or control, this act is primarily a parent dedication – our devoting ourselves to the sacred task of Christian parenthood. But there is more to it than this. We cannot



give our child's personal allegiance for him (her), but we can hold goals for his life, pray and influence him towards them. In the Dedication Service we subject our choice of such goals to God's will. We need to do this because, as parents, we are tempted to treat our children as if they were our possessions and try to live out our own unfulfilled wishes through them. The Dedication Service therefore helps us both to acknowledge that our child's life belongs rightfully to God and also to allow him to have an unobstructed loyalty to Christ.

In order to make this act of dedication specific, we are asked to commit ourselves by God's strength to pray for our child, to teach him (her) the Christian faith, and to set him (her) an example of consistent Christian living and healthy relationships.

We promise to **pray** for God's help and blessing. Parenthood demands extraordinary wisdom and strength which God can give to those who regularly turn to Him. When we pray, we should ask not only for help in our duties as parents but also that God's Spirit will work in our child's life so that he (or she) may come personally to commit himself (herself) to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

We promise also to **teach** our child God's Word. The Bible stresses the obligation of parents to do so. *'These words I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and 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, when you lie down, and when you rise.'* - Deuteronomy 6:6,7. A child's spiritual training is primarily his (her) parents' responsibility and therefore we do not observe the custom of appointing 'God Parents' to discharge this duty. We should begin teaching our child at the earliest possible age by telling him (her) Bible stories in a simple way and explaining the reasons for our family's Christian practices. The importance of conducting family devotions cannot be over emphasised. This practice is not difficult even for the inexperienced with the help of daily Bible reading notes, which a pastor could recommend should you need any.

We promise finally to set our child a good **example**. This is most important. Praying and teaching will be empty unless backed by daily conduct which is consistent with the principles we profess. We need to realise that our marital relationship, the values we adopt, and the way we live in our home will exert a profound influence on our child's life. This applies especially to worship – to 'send' our child to church without going ourselves will cause them to doubt, not only our sincerity, but also the value of worship itself.



***The Dedication Service Involves PRAYER
for God's Blessing***

After the promises have been made, the Dedication Service concludes as the pastor takes the child into his arms, announces the child's name and prays for God's blessing upon him (her). Certain parents brought their children to Jesus for His blessing. Although He was busy and was shortly to be crucified, Jesus was indignant that His disciples tried to send them away and He took the time to gather the children in His arms and bless them – *Mark 10:13,16*. Jesus Christ still receives and blesses children - not mechanically, by some special formula – but in response to the sincere desire of parents who are willing to make opportunities for their children to get to know Him.

That, then, is the meaning of the Dedication Service. It does not mean that we promise to be perfect parents, but it certainly does mean that we take the responsibilities for Christian parenthood very seriously, and sincerely intend to order our home according to God's will; otherwise we make the service a mockery. God has solemnly warned, '*You shall be careful to perform what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God what you have promised with your mouth*' – *Deuteronomy 23:23*. The pastor, therefore, seeks with you to make the promises as appropriate to your circumstances as possible.

If we commit ourselves to teach our child to know God, we ought, of course, to know Him ourselves. Should parents be uncertain of their relationship to God, a pastor would gladly help in this matter.

The Dedication Service is usually conducted in church. The congregation is involved and undertakes to help us discharge our responsibilities wherever it can. Our church has a Crèche, a Sunday School “Kids Zone” (Grades 1 to 6), a Teenage Class “T-Force” (Grades 7-9), a Youth Group, Family Life Groups and a number of other groups and activities to provide training, fellowship and inspiration for our children. A Dedication Service should mark the beginning of a closer partnership between the home and the church. The family and congregation are encouraged to commit to supporting, and sharing with, the family in this.

Mistaken Ideas of the Dedication Service

There are a number of beliefs and practices which are often, quite wrongly, associated with the Dedication Service. They call for a word of clarification.

The Dedication Service is Not a Baptism or Christening

Many churches practise 'Infant Baptism', but the Bible nowhere teaches such a concept. In the New Testament only those who had repented of their sin and put their faith in Jesus Christ were baptised. The act of baptism witnesses to a personal conversion to Jesus Christ, symbolising a believer's identification with his Lord's death and resurrection. Baptism is therefore reserved for those who have been saved by personally accepting the grace God gives us in Christ, and is something totally different from the Dedication Service.

The Dedication Service is Not a Means of Spiritual Security

There is a widespread but totally superstitious desire for a religious rite to prepare children in case of early death. The Bible nowhere suggests that such a ritual is necessary for the salvation of children. The Bible says that *'it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish'* – Matthew 18:14.

Children are precious to God and we can trust Him to treat them justly and lovingly. Further than that, we cannot go. In the Dedication Service, therefore, we do not seek to persuade God to be kindly disposed toward our children. There is simply no need for this.

The Dedication Service is Not an Obligatory Rite

The practice is not explicitly commanded by Jesus Christ and it is not a principle of our faith. The Dedication Service is optional, a matter of parents' personal choice – and some prefer not to observe it. This is not to say that it is not a valid Christian practice. The Dedication Service reflects the spontaneous desire which God's people have always felt for their friends to join with them at the great events of life, publicly recognising God's part in them. It is also suggested by Jesus' response when His disciples objected to parents bringing their children to Him for His blessing. *'Let (literally*

“permit”) the children come to Me, do not hinder them’ – Mark 10:14. This may not be a directive command, instituting the Dedication Service as a general observance, but it is an encouragement to parents to seek Christ’s blessing on their children.

In this regard the Dedication Service is similar to a wedding or a funeral service. The Bible says much about marriage and death but gives virtually no guidance on weddings and funerals. They, like dedication services, are consistent with the Christian faith and are usually conducted in church.

It may happen that only one parent is involved in a Dedication Service because the other parent is indifferent to spiritual matters or because the mother or father is a single parent. The Scripture teaches that despite the possible disadvantages, one Christian parent can exert a positive influence on their family – *1 Corinthians 7:14.*

The Dedication Service is not obligatory but it can be a real help in solemnising our commitment to Christian parenthood. Our church invites parents who desire such a service, whether or not they be members, to make arrangements with a pastor, provided only that they sincerely seek to raise their children according to Christian principles.

Questions for Personal Consideration

To help you decide whether or not to ask for a Dedication Service, the following questions are suggested for your careful consideration or for discussion with Pastor Allan Jones

- What are my personal motives for requesting a Dedication Service?
- What do I understand by 'dedicate'? Who is being dedicated in the service? Who can dedicate?
- Am I spiritually in a position to guide my child to faith in God, and if not, what do I need to do?
- To what extent am I prepared to devote my child to God? How, for instance, would I react if he (she) were called one day to some sacrificial Christian service?
- What benefits do I expect from the Dedication Service?
- What changes will need to be made in my home if I take the Dedication Service seriously? Am I really willing to make them?
- Who should I invite? (It may be a good opportunity to share your 'faith journey' with family and friends.

Request and Information Form

We have acquainted ourselves with the meaning of the Dedication Service and would like to ask for a service.

Father's Full Name:

Mother's Full Name:.....

Residential Address:
.....

Telephone:

Child's Full Name:

Child's Date of Birth:

Other Children:
.....
.....

I/We would like help with starting regular Family Devotions. Yes / No

Parent's Signature:

Date:

Possible Date of Service:

(to be arranged with the pastor of your choice -

Pastor)

