

Child Dedication

BECOMING LIKE JESUS - Small Group Resource

Children are very important in the Kingdom of God, and we want to walk with parents as they raise their children. We follow the example of Mary and Joseph in Luke 2:22 when they presented Jesus in the temple.

Small Group Dialogue

- To what extent do you view children as a gift from God?
- What does it look like to act as a steward of these gifts?
- Is child dedication a next step for you as a parent in this process?
- How can we as a small group support each other in shepherding our children?

How to shepherd someone through the Child Dedication process

1. **Getting Started:** To get started on the process of Child Dedication, the parents can go to the Heartland Website, www.heartlandalliance.ca/child-dedication to find the steps to take on the road to child dedication.
 - **Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour?** It is good to have someone describe how they have come to receive Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Do they have a personal experience and can they share it?
 - **Have any questions come up because of going through the material online?** Take time to debrief if they have any questions or concerns that have come up.
 - **Do you meet the requirements of dedicating your child at Heartland?** If so, the couple can then fill out the form to request child dedication.

2. **Shepherding them through the journey:** It is good to do an in-home visit to shepherd the couple in a deeper way and go through the commitment that they are making. This in-home visit gives an opportunity to go over Heartland theology and practice of child dedication.

- **Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to light anything in the couple's life that He would like for them to talk through with you.** How is their faith as a couple and/or individual? What blessing or known sin is in their family heritage? It is good to deal with and expose any known generational curses and encourage families on a path of healing and dealing with these things.
- **Take time to read through the section “What does the Bible say about child dedication?”** (<https://www.heartlandalliance.ca/child-dedication>) As you read through each of these eight statements, talk them through with the parents. Can they express their understanding of what each statement means? Are they in agreement with these things? Are there any areas of concern?
- **Do they understand that dedication is not a declaration of salvation?** An important part here is that parents are clear that dedication is not salvation. Their child will have to make their own personal commitment of faith.
- **Read over the list of commitments with the parents.** Can they confidently say, “we do” after each one?
- **If you are confident they are ready ...**
 - Who should you invite? Include loved ones! Remind them to invite family and friends to the day.
 - How can this be used as an opportunity to share your faith with non-Christians? Encourage them to consider inviting non-Christians to this important event.

3. **Shepherding on the day of the dedication:** This is the day! Take time to pray for them as they prepare. Likely they may be nervous and would appreciate encouragement to move forward in confidence.

- Take time to write an encouragement to the parents.
- Send them a text in the days ahead of the dedication to affirm their decision and to deal with any concerns that may have come up.

- Write out how you will introduce the couple to the congregation. Take time to write out a prayer for their child/children. It is good to set aside quiet time for the Holy Spirit to speak and give you insight for how you will pray. Your prayer should include that:
 - As your church family we support you in your commitment to establish a godly home where biblical values are the foundation and Christ is at the center.
 - You will experience the blessings of His joy and peace as you partner with Him in raising your family.
 - You may be blessed by God's presence in the good times and through the difficult challenges of life, for He has promised to always be with you.
 - God will bless you and your family through the generations with His faithfulness as you put Him first in your life and walk with Him.

4. Shepherding after the Child Dedication:

- Follow up with them a week or two after their child dedication.
- Celebrate with them, encouraging them to continue to grow in their parenting journey.

Additional Leader Resources

- "Spirit-filled Children" Sermon, Ephesians Series, Pastor Wade Gardiner, June 5, 2021

What does the Bible say about child dedication?

Biblical examples:

- 1 Samuel 1:24-28 (Hannah presenting Samuel)
- Luke 2:22 (Joseph and Mary presenting Jesus)

Biblical principles:

The public act of dedicating a child to God is a direct response to the Scriptures that teach:

1. Children are a gift from God.

Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him. (Psalm 127:3)

2. A child's spiritual life is vitally important.

Jesus said to his disciples: *"Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin."* (Luke 17:1-2)

3. Parents are "stewards," raising children according to God's plan, therefore, parents dedicate themselves as well as their child. With Child Dedication, parents are publicly declaring a commitment to raise their children according to God's plan. They will be God's representatives in their children's lives, to do everything possible to create a healthy environment, at home and within the Christian community, for their children to grow up knowing and loving God.

"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." (Deuteronomy 5:9-10)

4. Parents need God's help to raise, guide and protect children.

... God has said, *"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."* So we say with confidence, *the Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid ...* (Hebrews 13:5-6)

5. There is a blessing to those who honour God, not just for themselves but for their children and their children's children.

I, the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the children with the sins of the father to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep my commandments. (Deuteronomy 5:9-10)

6. The vows that parents make are not only a declaration to God and the people present but also to the spiritual realm as well.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:12)

7. As the Body of Christ and spiritual family, we, the church, enter into an accountability relationship with the parents, accepting help from one another when necessary or beneficial.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:1-2)

8. Dedication of children is not an expression of faith on the child's part in any way. The Scriptures teach that every person must personally repent of their own sins and make an individual profession of faith. Parents cannot do this for their children.

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord... (Acts 3:19)

Parental confirmation of commitment

Because you are affirming that your child is a gift from God and that He holds you responsible for how you raise him/her, the pastor/small group leader will lead you in confirming your commitment of the following:

- Do you dedicate yourselves to raise your child in the ways of the Lord, providing opportunities for a personal relationship with Jesus as Saviour and Lord?
- Will you pray for, and with, your child to encourage a personal, intimate and dependent relationship with Jesus?
- Will you teach your child about Jesus and the truth of the Bible as God's Word?
- Will you model biblical values through personal godliness and provide a living example of a Christ-centered life?
- Will you involve your child in the life of the church, nurturing a love for the Body of Christ?
- Will you instill a joy in serving the Lord by demonstrating a heart of service?

The pastor/small group leader will then pray for you and your child.

(<https://www.heartlandalliance.ca/child-dedication>)

