

Baby/Child Dedication at Innisfail Baptist Church

Parents partnering with God as they raise their children

Innisfail Baptist Church believes children are a gift from God, and we are very excited that you are investigating baby/child dedication.

Baby/Child dedication is a public commitment you make before God, your church, and your family. The dedication service provides you, the parent(s), an opportunity to express publically your desire to lead and spiritually nurture your child in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, so your child will develop a desire to love God and love others.

The joy of Jesus' birth was shared with the people of God in the house of God. Like most Jewish parents in that day, Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple to be presented to God. Long before this time godly parents presented their children to God. And to this day, parents present their children to God, seeking His blessing, as they commit themselves to lead and spiritually nurture your child for God's purposes.

Children are a gift from God. Like everything good in life, they come from God and they belong to him. Parents are caretakers of the children God has given them. As parents speak to the pastor about their desire to dedicate their children to God, there are several questions they should ask themselves.

First, since dedication of children is a Christian act of giving children to God for his glory, the most obvious question to ask is, **"Are we Christians?"** As a couple standing before God dedicating their child to him in a Christian church, their life should show the characteristics of Christ. Sometimes people bring their babies for dedication or baptism because it is "the thing to do." God is honored by hearts that genuinely desire to please him without regard for what others think. Christian baby/child dedication of is for Christian families.

The next question is **"Are we serious about this dedication?"** Parents should ask themselves if they really want to see their child serve God. Would they like to see their child become a preacher, a Christian businessman, a missionary, or a common laborer for Christ? When Hannah, the mother of Samuel the prophet dedicated him to the Lord, she promised to give him up to serve God in the temple (1 Samuel 1-2:11).

Dedication of children to God means handing them over to him to do with as he pleases. An act of dedication is an act of faith in the wisdom and mercy of God.

Another question that is appropriate to ask at the time of Baby/Child dedication is **"Are we willing to oversee our child's Christian development?"** Scripture tells us that we are to train a child in the way he should go (Proverbs 22:6). This includes meeting together regularly as Christians to spur one another on to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:23-24). Dedication of children to God is a promise to model a Christian lifestyle to the children worshipping with a church family regularly. In its truest sense, Baby/Child dedication is a dedication of the parents to be godly role models.

A final question to ask is, **"Are we, the parents, in agreement on this?"** A pastor cannot really dedicate someone else's baby to God, because the baby does not belong to the pastor. The parents have been made caretakers of their baby. Only they can dedicate the child to God. It is important that both Father and Mother fully agree that they will together follow through on their commitments to raise their child for the glory and purposes of God.

As parents presenting your child to the Lord, you signify your own personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You show a desire to see God's will carried out in the life of your child. And you acknowledge your place as stewards of what really belongs to God - your child.

Dedication means that by word and example, you promise to teach your child to live a holy life and to value the good gifts God has given us. You promise to give your child every opportunity and encouragement to develop into the well-rounded Christian individual God intends him or her to be.

Dedication before God and the Church means that you realize that our church family ought to have a large part in the spiritual growth of your family. They should know you and your child so they can give prayer support, assist in Bible teaching, and provide opportunities, facilities and workers through which you and your child can enter into the fullness of Christian faith.

- If it is your wish to follow the example of godly parents who throughout the ages presented their children to God in dedication
- If you understand that your child is a gift from God and that he will hold you accountable for your child's spiritual growth in Christ
- If you promise to pray for and with your child, to instruct your child in the things of God, to teach your child to read God's Word, and to do everything in your power to bring your child to a knowledge of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord
- If you believe it is a great privilege to offer a child back to the Creator, and wish to stand before God and the Church to dedicate your child to God, then the leadership at Innisfail Baptist Church would love to assist you in doing so.

Listed below are frequently asked questions about baby/child dedication. If you have additional questions, please speak with the Pastor or an Elder.

1. What is the biblical purpose and history of a baby/child dedication?

The scriptural root of a child dedication is found in 1 Samuel 1:27–28, where a godly woman named Hannah prayed year after year for God to give her a child. He answered her prayer and she gave birth to a son, whom she named Samuel. When Samuel was born, Hannah prayed these words:

²⁷ For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. ²⁸ Therefore I also have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the LORD." So they worshiped the LORD there.

In Luke chapter 2 of the New Testament, following the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph took the infant Jesus to the temple and dedicated Him.

In both Scripture passages, the parents entrusted their child completely to God.

The writings of Moses found in Deuteronomy describe God's plan for how a parent should raise up a child:

Deuteronomy 6: ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ⁶ "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

One key step in marking your desire to nurture your child in the ways of God is to dedicate him or her to God publically, through a child dedication ceremony.

2. Do I need to be a member at Innisfail Baptist Church member to have my baby/child dedicated?

You do not need to be a member of Innisfail Baptist Church to have your child dedicated. However, we do encourage parents to make sure they are calling Innisfail Baptist Church their home church. Why? In dedicating your child to God, you are stating that you are willing to partner with God and the church to raise your child in cooperation with God's intentions. To partner with any church, a parent would be wise to decide if he or she agrees with its beliefs and vision, so they can be all-in in their partnership with the church.

When you choose to become a member at Innisfail Baptist Church, you are stating that you agree with the beliefs and values of Innisfail Baptist Church, and that you want beliefs and values to be your home church. For more information on membership at Innisfail Baptist Church, speak to the Pastor or an Elder.

To have your child dedicated at Innisfail Baptist Church:

- We ask parents to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- We ask parents to be sure their beliefs line up with the Statement of Faith of Innisfail Baptist Church.
- We ask parents to be regular attenders of Innisfail Baptist Church.
- We ask parents who are living together and who are not married to take steps to acknowledge and surrender to God's plan for their relationship before participating in a child dedication service.

3. What can I expect during a baby/child dedication ceremony?

During the dedication service, parents express vows before God, their family, and the church, declaring their desire to raise their child in a God-honoring way. Because parents are the key role models for their children, they play a primary role in the dedication service.

Parents will be asked to affirm the following commitments:

- Do you receive this child with gratitude, as God's gift to you and your family?
- Do you commit to each other as parents, creating a stable environment in which your child can mature? Will you make a covenant to strengthen your marriage relationship?
- Do you commit to be parents of personal faith, recognizing your children are more likely to follow God's path by the model they first observe in you?
- Do you commit to lead a faith-filled home that honors God in all your relationships and in the choices you make in spiritually growing your family?
- Do you commit to be parents with patience, recognizing that with your inherent strengths and weaknesses, your desire to shape your child is a loving act that will require time, prayer, and God in order to produce in your children what He and you hope for?

4. Does Innisfail Baptist Church baptize infants?

Scripture provides evidence that Baptism follows an individual's decision to trust Christ alone for salvation (Acts 2:41, 8:12, and 10:47-48). And the New Testament records the baptisms of adult believers only.

In the Bible, we find parents bringing their children to Jesus. He held them, prayed for them, and told us to welcome them. But He did not baptize them and He did not tell anyone else to baptize them. Innisfail Baptist Church believes Baptism is for those who have made a personal decision to trust Christ alone for their salvation, once they have the maturity and ability to understand what that means. As a general rule, the Elders of Innisfail Baptist Church recommend a believer to be at least 12 years old to before they are baptized.

Baby/Child dedication is not a sacrament; nor does it impart grace or salvation to a child. Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ as each person recognizes their sinfulness and receives forgiveness and eternal life through Christ and His work on the cross.

Rather than baptizing infants or children, Innisfail Baptist Church encourages Christian parents to dedicate their children. This is a ceremony in which parents formally call upon God's blessing for their child and publicly commit to raise him or her in accordance with Scripture.

5. At what age can a baby/child take part in a dedication service?

While Innisfail Baptist Church does not have a set age requirement for baby/child dedication, the average age for a child to be dedicated is four to eight months old, although many parents dedicate children much older than that, often for the following reasons:

- The parent(s) are new believers in Christ and their children were not dedicated when they were infants.
- The parent(s) are having a younger child dedicated and want to have their older child dedicated at the same time.

6. Can a single parent participate in a baby/child dedication service?

Yes! Child dedication signifies the commitment of parents (including single parents) to do their best to raise their child to be a follower of Christ. Additionally, we highly encourage single parents to dedicate their child as they commit themselves to raise him or her without the presence or partnership of a spouse. The decision to dedicate a child is not dependent upon the beliefs of the ex-spouse; however we encourage single parents to discuss child dedication with their ex-spouse. Ideally, both parents—even if not married—would still commit to the dedication of their child to God. We acknowledge that this is often not possible, and that it takes extra effort for a single parent to raise a child. As a church, Innisfail Baptist Church is committed to supporting single parents in providing a Christian foundation for their child's upbringing.

7. Can parent(s) assign godparents?

Although the term "godparent" is not used at Innisfail Baptist Church, we do welcome parents to invite friends and family members committed to supporting them to stand with them during the dedication. The presence of these significant adults symbolizes their commitment to play a supportive role in the child's spiritual development.