

What does Parent - Child Dedication mean?

Parents partnering with God as they raise their children

Parent-Child dedication is a public commitment parents make before God, the church, and their family. The dedication service provides parents an opportunity to express publicly their desire to lead and spiritually nurture their child in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, so their children develop a desire to know God and establish a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is also a time for family and friends to show their support and intention to help parents with their commitment to their children. There is no "saving grace" attached to this ceremony. It is simply a statement of intent and desire. Participants need not be church members but need to be able to answer "yes" to the following questions:

- Do you acknowledge your child as a gift from God?
- Do you desire to live a godly life before your child so that he or she will have an example to follow?
- Do you commit yourself to give your child opportunity to hear the gospel so that he or she might be able to have a personal relationship with Christ?
- Do you commit yourself to raise your child in the instruction and discipline of the Lord?

What child dedication does NOT mean.

The dedication of a child does not guarantee a child's salvation, but is an opportunity for the parent(s) to express a desire and willingness to teach their children the truths of God's Word that one day may lead to their salvation.

It is not "baptism," because the Bible teaches that baptism is only for those who have personally accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and are now living a life as a believer in Him.

With the blessing of a baby comes tremendous responsibility for Christian parents. We are entrusted to raise our children in accordance to biblical truth and point them to Jesus Christ. In light of this great responsibility, New Horizons Community Church views the time of dedication as a high calling of the parents. Parents are committing themselves to providing a loving environment where their child will be nurtured and be able to hear the gospel. The dedication of the child to the Lord is important for the entire church family.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the biblical purpose and history of a 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. The Lord answered her prayer and she gave birth to a son, whom she named Samuel. When Samuel was born, Hannah prayed these words:

"For this boy I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of Him. So I have also dedicated him to the Lord; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord."

In Luke 2, 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 6:5-9 describe God's plan for how a parent should

raise up a child:

"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. Tie them as symbols on your hand and bind them on your forehead. Write them on the door frames of your houses 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 publicly, through a child dedication ceremony.

We encourage parents to make sure they are calling New Horizons 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 needs to determine if he or she agrees with its beliefs, mission, and vision.

To have your child dedicated at NHCC:

- We ask parents to be sure their beliefs line up with NHCC's doctrinal statement.
- We ask parents to be regular attendees of NHCC's services.
- We ask parents who are living together and who are not married to take steps to acknowledge and follow God's plan for their relationship before participating in a child dedication service.

We are open to having conversations with you on any of the above statements. If you are interested, please contact the church office to set up a time.

What can I expect during a Parent - Child Dedication Ceremony?

During the dedication service, parents affirm 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. We will anoint your child with a lightly scented oil, usually on the forehead, and pray a prayer of blessing.

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 desire 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 desire to be parents with patience, recognizing that with your inherent strengths and weaknesses, you 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?

Does NHCC baptize infants?

Scripture provides evidence that baptism follows an individual's decision to trust Christ alone for salvation. And the New Testament records the baptisms of adult believers only.

Acts 2:40-41 - *"And with many other words (Peter) testified and exhorted them saying, 'Be saved...' Then those who gladly received his word were baptized."*

Acts 8:12-13 - *"But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done."*

Acts 10:46-48 - *"Then Peter answered, 'Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we?' And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord..."*

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. NHCC 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.

- Dedication is not a sacrament, nor does it impart grace or salvation to a child. Salvation comes only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as people recognize their sinfulness and receive forgiveness and eternal life through Christ and His work on the cross. No human work can merit salvation.
- Rather than baptizing infants or children, NHCC encourages Christian parents to dedicate their children where parents formally call upon God's blessing for their children and publicly commit to raise them in accordance with Scripture.

At what age can a child take part in a dedication service?

NHCC does not have a set age requirement for child dedication. Typically, children are infants - preschool age. However many parents dedicate children much older than that, often for the following reasons:

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

Can a single parent participate in a child dedication service?

Yes! Parent-child dedication signifies the commitment of parent(s) - not necessarily couples - 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. 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, NHCC is committed to supporting single parents in providing a Christian foundation for their child's upbringing.

Who should we invite to the service? Do I need to select "godparents" for my child?

You are welcome to invite as many friends and family members as you'd like. We do not use the term "godparents". However, we certainly support your choice of significant individuals to offer support and encouragement and to hold you accountable to the commitment you will be making.

The Dedication Ceremony

Preparation

Prayer

We encourage parents to spend time in prayer prior to the dedication. That week find time to give thanks to the Lord for your child, and if he or she is old enough, dialogue about the coming event and share details you feel would be helpful. Above all else, reaffirm to the Lord your desire to be God-honoring parents and seek His guidance as you begin this wonderful journey.

Attire

We are a fairly informal fellowship, so dressy clothes are not necessary. If you desire to take pictures and want your family to dress a certain way, please feel free to wear what is comfortable for those who will be involved.

At the Church

Arrival & Seating

Please arrive at least 20 minutes prior (10:25am) to the start of the service (10:45am). Consider packing any childcare items the night before to ensure leaving the house on time. Once you arrive at the church, please sit on the front row.

Standing

Parent-Child Dedication typically occurs immediately following the Welcome time. The pastor will make a few introductory comments and then call families to the center front of the platform. Each family will be introduced by the pastor. In turn, the pastor will request from the parents and church body an affirmation regarding their desire to raise the child to love Jesus Christ. Then, the pastor will lead in a time of prayer of dedication, after which families will be dismissed. If you have younger children who might become restless and are finding it difficult to sit through the morning service, we encourage you to take advantage of our Nursery Kare (0-24mo.'s), Kidz Kove (3-5yrs.), and Kidz Church (Kindergarten thru 5th grade) opportunities.

Follow-up

Certificate & Bible

Parents will receive a personalized certificate and baby/child New Testament Bible for their child.

Letter

In addition to the certificate and bible, NHCC will send a letter addressed to the child that is not to be opened until they are twelve years old. The letter serves as a reminder so when the child is older, he or she will have a record of the commitment the child's parents made in dedicating themselves and the child to the Lord.