

# FRESHWATER CHURCH

## CHILD DEDICATION POLICY ADOPTED DEC 2015 – EDITED MAY 2017

Dear Parents,

The Bible consistently calls children a blessing. It tells us that we should teach the scriptures to our children (Deut 6:5-7). It tells us that we must bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4). It also tells us that when we train them up in the ways of the Lord they will not stray from it (Prov 22:6).

Dedicating a child is an act by which the parents of a child acknowledge publicly that their child is a gift from God and that they will commit to do all they can to raise their child in a home that honors God and His scriptures. It is also an opportunity for your faith family (Freshwater Church) to reaffirm their duties to pray for the salvation and spiritual maturation of your child and to devote themselves to their discipleship. Although Child Dedication is in no way salvific, it does help us as parents remember our duty to usher our children toward a relationship with Jesus Christ.

I am encouraged that you are considering dedicating your child to the Lord. But I would also urge you to consider the words of scripture in Ecclesiastes 5:5, “It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.” All of this is to say that this is a serious commitment that should only work to confirm the desire that is already on your heart; namely, that your child would grow to develop an insatiable desire to glorify God and enjoy His presence in their life. I commend you for this dedication.

God Bless,

Joshua Hartley

Lead Pastor – Freshwater Church

# **Dedicating Your Child: Q & A**

## **What is a Child Dedication?**

Child dedication is both an event and a process that focuses on celebration and commitment. Together we (Freshwater Church and your family) celebrate the gift of a new child. We also commit ourselves to God to teach and nurture the child in the Christian faith. The commitment is one of the church and one of the parents, but not of the child. The child will have his or her opportunity as he or she grows older and is able to personalize faith in Jesus. While we look forward to that day, we recognize that there is much instruction, nurturing, prayer, and love to give before a child is able to repent and believe in Jesus.

## **What kind of commitment am I making?**

This commitment begins by acknowledging your relationship with Jesus Christ. As you present your child to God in the presence of the pastor and congregation, you are recognizing that he or she belongs to God and has been born to experience His love and to serve Him. You are committing, as Christian parents, to teach the truths of God's Word in your home and participate in regular worship with your children. You are also committing to be a Christ-life example and seek to lead your children to a personal faith in Christ. You are making a commitment to do your best, as the parents of this child, to point them to their need for Jesus through your life and through instruction.

## **Are there any requirements?**

Only those parents who are Christians and married (a man and a woman) may present their children to the Lord as a couple. Because of the nature of the commitment being made at a child dedication, a non-believing spouse would be unable to participate. A single parent is also able to dedicate their child so long as the parent is Christian.

## **What age should my child be?**

Ideally your child should be no older than 1 year. Children respond more favorably to public presentation at this age. Older children will be accommodated as needed.

## **Is this the same as baptism?**

No. Biblical baptism can only be performed on a person who has placed their faith in Jesus Christ. Child dedication should not be confused with baptism. We should

pray that the child grows up to place their faith in Jesus Christ and then follows in believers baptism.

## **Can I choose my date?**

Kind of. Child Dedications are scheduled on Sundays in which the order of service will best accommodate the dedication. The staff will do their best to accommodate your desired date.

## **Is there a fee for the Child Dedication?**

No.

## **Who is invited onto the stage?**

Typically, only the immediate family (Mother, Father, and Children) come onto the stage. In situations where a person other than the biological parents are rearing the child those adults are of course encouraged to be on stage as well.

## **What if we're not married?**

Because child dedication involves making a commitment as a family to follow the Lord, parents cohabitating (living together) outside of marriage would be unable to make this vow or participate in the ceremony. If you would like pastoral guidance with this issue or to schedule a wedding please contact Lead Pastor Joshua Hartley.

## **Are single parents allowed to dedicate their children?**

Absolutely!

## **What happens in a child dedication?**

The family is recognized in one of the Sunday Morning services, generally at the end of the service. The child dedication involves a short message (around 3 minutes) by the pastor as well as a charge to the parents and to the church. The family will also be given a gift from the church.

## **How do we know if we're ready to make this commitment?**

As you prepare for this dedication, there are several questions which will help you in considering how you can best commit and dedicate yourselves to be the parents God desires you to be.

First, Child Dedication is an act of faith in God. It is a covenant with God and His church to teach and nurture your child. So, the first question to ask is, “Am I a Christian?” To dedicate your child to God, you must first be dedicated to Him and possess a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The next question is, “Are we serious about this dedication?” You should ask yourselves if you truly want to see your child serve God. If not, it’s better not to make such an oath before God.

The third question is, “Are we willing to oversee our child’s spiritual development?” This represents God’s call on your life as a parent, and no one has more influence over a child’s spiritual development than a parent, for good or for bad. So, you must be dedicated to modeling a growing relationship with Christ, living a holy life, and worshiping and ministering through involvement in a church family. It means giving your child opportunities and encouragement to grow in knowledge and in faith in God and to become the person God intends for him or her to be.

It does not mean, however, that you will or you must do be perfect as we know that you will fall short of the standard set by God. Nor will our church or its leaders be a perfect partner. As we make this commitment together, we recognize wholeheartedly that we need God’s help. We need His grace.

## **Ok, we’re ready. What do we do now?**

1. Review ‘You and Your Child’s Dedication’ (attached)
2. Fill out ‘Child Dedication Form’ (attached)
3. Email form to Administrative Assistant Maribeth Russell ([maribeth@freshwaterjc.com](mailto:maribeth@freshwaterjc.com)) or hand in to Maribeth or Lead Pastor Joshua

# YOU AND YOUR CHILD'S DEDICATION

“Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him.” Psalm 127:3

We, as Christians, have a tremendous responsibility given to us when the Lord blesses us with a child. By doing so, He entrusts us with the responsibility of raising that child in the way of the Lord and establishing early in his life a foundation built upon Jesus Christ. It is this tremendous responsibility that causes us to think of child dedications as “family dedications.” We feel that the whole family needs to be lifted up to the Lord so that each member will be able to keep his or her responsibilities.

But first, what exactly is involved in “dedicating” your child to the Lord? As mentioned, children are a heritage from the Lord. He gives them to us to bless us, and because of this, we must be willing to give them back to Him. We too must be willing to totally submit our children to the will of our Father.

A perfect example of “dedicating” a child to the Lord is given to us in I Samuel 1:11, 26- 68. Hannah, being barren (or without child) for many years, was weeping before the Lord because of her barrenness. As she was weeping, she made a vow to God. “And she made a vow, saying, “O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, THEN I WILL GIVE HIM TO THE LORD ALL THE DAYS OF HIS LIFE...” (I SAMUEL 1:11)

God honored Hannah’s request and gave her a son named Samuel. Hannah then, in keeping her vow, dedicated (or set apart) Samuel unto the Lord.

We see here a beautiful example of what our attitudes should be towards our children and their relationship to God. We are to do the most we can to “set apart” our children to God until the day that they can make their own choice. By dedicating your children to the Lord, you are making a vow to raise them in His ways. The following is a list (though not exhaustive), of some of the things parents do as part of keeping their vows.

## 1. KNOW GOD’S GIFT OF LOVE

The greatest importance is to know the gift of God’s love in Jesus Christ personally as parents. In Ephesians 2:6-9 the Bible says “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”

## 2. BE A LIVING EXAMPLE OF CHRIST TO YOUR CHILDREN

It does not do your child any good to instruct him in the way of the Lord if you

yourself do not honor Christ in your life. Therefore, it is good for you to always be examining yourself and your witness to your children. In Proverbs 20:7 the Bible says "The righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed (happy) are his children after him." The main reason for the blessed state of this man's children is that they have someone to look up to and to use as an example to model their own behavior. We as parents are encouraged to strive to be that example to our children even as Christ is our example.

### 3. INSTRUCT YOUR CHILD IN THE WAY OF THE LORD

We are taught in Ephesians 6:4 (NIV) to "bring them (your children) up in training and instruction of the Lord." Proverbs 22:6 adds, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it." If we, while our children are young, instruct them in His ways, our children will grow in the ways of God for a lifetime.

### 4. PRAY CONSTANTLY FOR YOUR CHILD

A parent's responsibility to pray for their child does not end at their dedication. Rather, it continues throughout the rest of their life. We see an example of this in Job 1:5, which states "When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom." And in James 5:16 "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." The prayer of Christ-centered parents is fundamental to raising your children in the ways of the Lord and nurturing them toward faith in Jesus Christ.