

# ISSUES

A Biblical Perspective On Contemporary Topics



## Dedicating Children To the Lord

## WHY DO WE DEDICATE CHILDREN?

Dedicating children to the Lord is *not* a practice mandated in Scripture. It is simply an attempt to apply several Biblical principles regarding parenting and Church life in a manner that is culturally relevant.

In Mark 10:13-16 we read this story:

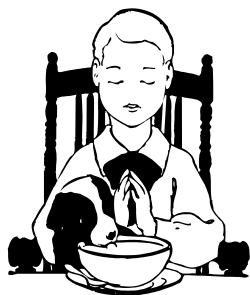
Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

The dedication of children is a way of bringing them to Jesus for His blessing.

Parents bring their children, recognizing that they are the Lord's, on loan to them for a time. As Christians, we understand that all we have has been given us from God. One day we will answer to Him for how we have managed what He's entrusted to our care, including our children. Dedication is an act of declaring Jesus' Lordship over our family.

Also, by bringing our children before the Lord and the congregation, we are making a vow that we intend to raise our children in the nurture and admonition of Jesus Christ as we are instructed in Ephesians 6:4. For this reason, parents considering taking this step of formally dedicating their children need to consider the seriousness of the commitment. It's a serious time because vows we take before God, He expects us to fulfill. Ecclesiastes 5:5 says, "Better not to vow than to vow and not pay." Jesus warned His followers about taking frivolous oaths in the Sermon on the Mount.

Understood this way, dedicating our children is not some kind of one time religious ritual. It is a sober dedication of the *parents* to the ways of the Lord in raising their child. It is an act that *initiates* a life-long relationship governed by Scripture.



The vow, made to the Lord, is witnessed before the congregation, much like in a wedding. It's the congregation's duty to pray for and hold the parents accountable to their vow in the months and years to come.

## WHAT DEDICATION ISN'T

Dedicating a child does not make them a Christian. That's a decision the child will have to make for him or herself when he or she reaches the age of accountability. A dedication service is not a surrogate for Baptism. Baptism is a step of obedience that *believers* are to take when they understand and are ready to make their own personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Therefore, we do not believe in infant baptism. There is no evidence of the baptism of infants in the Bible.

## WHEN & WHERE TO DEDICATE CHILDREN

The dedication of children is something individual families do in the context of the corporate assembly. That is why at Calvary Chapel we schedule dedications during the Sunday morning services.

We invite the parent(s) up to the stage, and then say a few brief words and pray. We encourage parents to consider who they might designate as a god-parent in the event of their demise and the need for the child to be raised by someone else. These god-parents are invited to participate in the dedication as they would become the parents in the case of such misfortune. A dedication certificate is then given to the parent(s).

## A FINAL WORD TO PARENTS

It's not uncommon for a mother or father who wants to dedicate his or her child to the Lord, to be married to someone who does not share their commitment to the Lordship of Christ. Since the dedication of children is a solemn vow to God to raise them in the nurture and knowledge of Christ, this places a burden on the unbeliever they may not be comfortable with. For that reason, we ask you to consider seriously what you are doing. What do you believe about God? Why are you wanting to dedicate your child? If your spouse has given this to you to read because they want to dedicate a child, but they are unsure of your position in regard to these things, please talk over this issue. It may be that you are uncomfortable making such a vow. If so, and your mate desires to proceed, you might decide to let them go ahead with the dedication while you do not join them on the stage. It may be that you want to investigate what Biblical parenting entails before deciding. If that's the case, please consider attending one of our parenting classes or checking out some of the teaching tapes we have on this important subject.

To set up a dedication, just call the church office.