

# BABY DEDICATION



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He established a testimony in Jacob  
and appointed a law in Israel,  
which he commanded the fathers  
to teach to their children,  
so the next generation  
would know them,  
  
even the children not yet born,  
and they in turn would tell their children.

Then they would put their hope  
in God  
  
and would not forget his works  
but keep his commandments.

—Psalm 78:5-7

## WHY DO WE DO CHILD DEDICATION AT SOJOURN?

In Psalm 78:7, we see God's desire for every generation. God wants every generation to know and trust in Him—not forgetting what he has done to rescue and save, but remembering Him and keeping His commandments. This is God's desire for every generation.

I know that if you are taking time to read this that it is probably your desire as well. But how will that desire be fulfilled? The first six verses of Psalm 78 show us that God has given us this responsibility. God commands us, parents, to teach our kids about him. The family is the primary context for your child to learn about God. It is in your home, in your car as you drive along the road, at your child's bedside, and at the breakfast table. It happens in the planned and in the unplanned moments. When we open the Word of God or connect our child's experience, pain, or sin to the heart of God and the hope of the Gospel.

Teaching children about God can't be done in one hour each week. It involves connecting the gospel to every day life.

While Psalm 78 makes clear that we are responsible for teaching our kids about God, it doesn't leave us alone in this responsibility. The psalm also tells us that God gave his law and testimonies in the context of a believing community. Training kids is a community project. It is the role of the whole church. After all, we need each other. We need one another's

encouragement, one another's accountability, and one another's eyes to see what we can't see.

So, these are the reasons that we do child dedication services at Sojourn:

**1<sup>ST</sup>** God wants our kids, and ultimately their hearts and lives to belong to him. So, we confess together, "God, all we have—even our children—belongs to you. All we have is yours."

**2<sup>ND</sup>** We don't just dedicate our children. We dedicate ourselves. We do this because we recognize our God-given responsibility as parents.

**3<sup>RD</sup>** We come to ask for help in the form of a commitment from the family of God, the church. The notes below will unpack each of these three reasons with more detail.

My prayer is that the Holy Spirit will use the teaching you encounter here to inspire and encourage you as you prepare to participate in our Child Dedication service.

With joy in Christ,

Trent Chambers

Lead Pastor



## FIRST STEPS, PART 1

### YOUR KIDS BELONG TO GOD

Unless the Lord builds the house,  
the builders labor in vain.  
—Psalm 127:1

Our kids don't belong to us. They belong to God. Certainly God has entrusted our kids to us. Psalm 127:3 tells us that children are a heritage from their Lord, a reward from him. It is true. Kids are God's gift to us. But, as with every gift he gives, we are just stewards. The older your kids get, the more it becomes clear that we can't control their destiny. Our kids' future, their health, their skill, their will and desires for life, who they will choose as a spouse, and even how long they will live—all of this belongs to God.

Your kids belong to God. Do you struggle to believe this truth? Has it impacted the kinds of dreams that you have and goals you set for your children? When we fail to remember that our kids belong to God, we are tempted to think that our success as parents is measured by our kids' success. Apart from his grace, our labors are vain. Our goals and plans never achieve his best. God wants us to be faithful, but he wants us to let him be in control of our kids' lives.

Discuss Together: Are you tempted to feel like a failure in your parenting? How are you defining ‘successful parenting?’ In what ways are you most tempted to doubt God’s goodness and faithfulness to you and your family?



## FIRST STEPS, PART 2: DO YOU HAVE A PLAN?

These commandments that I give you today  
are to be on 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 6:6-7

When you come forward with your child at our dedication service, you will see the following on the screen:

*Parents, will you commit to trust God’s promises made to you and your children in His Word?*

*Will you commit to seek God, and seek gospel change in the way you live and parent your children?*

*Will you commit to discipline your children and show them grace?*

*Will you commit to teach God’s Word to them and live out the gospel in your home?*

*Will you commit to pray for them and teach them to pray?*

*Will you commit to partner with this church community, seek their help and accountability, and lead your children to do the same?*

*Then, you will be prompted to say, "We will with God's help."*

Do the statements above sound scary? Maybe they should. You are making a huge commitment—trusting, seeking, disciplining, teaching, praying, and partnering. Committing to all of that sounds overwhelming. But lets be honest, most of us were freaking out before it sounded so formal. We all want to be good and godly parents. But where do we start?

Sure, there are a lot of books you can read on good parenting. And I'm sure we can compile a list of "100 things" we must do to be good parents. But, for this purpose, lets just look at 2.

**First, lets talk about Prayer.** God has given you this responsibility and desires that you come to him for help in this work. In prayer, we submit ourselves and those He has given us to His authority and to His power.

**Second, lets talk a bit about planning.** I want to give you a tool that will help you map out an intentional parenting plan.

## OBSTACLES TO PRAYER

Often, we believe lies about God that hinder our desire to pray and the effectiveness of those prayers. These lies include, "God is indifferent to my prayers," "God is impersonal and distant," "I

don't know how or what to pray for. I'm afraid to ask for what I really want." "I Don't have time to pray, I have too much going on." "God doesn't speak to people or give them strength in more."

**Q. Which of these lies resonates with you?**

The Lord longs for you to come to Him and commune with Him in daily prayer.

## **TRUTHS THAT ENCOURAGE PRAYER**

God invites us to pray with expectation, even though we don't fully understand. Psalm 34

Even if we doubt, we can have confidence in our Father's lasting love, because he has demonstrated this love on the cross. Psalm 139

Even with our hectic schedules and secular culture, God is involved in every aspect of our lives and we can pray about anything. Psalm 104

We can trust God, with childlike faith because we have a good Father who knows what is best for us. Psalm 103

We pray imperfectly. It is not our performance that makes our prayers effective but rather Christ, who intercedes and the Spirit who indwells. We can approach God in Jesus' name. Psalm 51

**Discuss Together:** Which of the above truths most resonates with your fears and doubts in the practice of prayer? How is God inviting you to grow as a prayerful-parent?

## **4 STEPS FOR INTENTIONAL PARENTING**

On your next night out, work through the first 3 steps toward intentional parenting.

### **STEP 1: ENVISIONING**

Pick a day for yourself and your family five years from now. Envision that day. To do so, answer as many pertinent, specific questions about life on that day as you can reasonably generate.

Examples of questions to answer:

#### Marriage and/or Immediate Family Life

- How often do you pray and/or pray together with your spouse?
- Do you have time alone? Do you have a regular date night?
- If you are married, how can you take better care of your spouse? What has helped your love to grow? How has your home become a place for unplanned connecting? What brings you together?
- How many children do you plan to have?
- How old will your children be (on the date you are envisioning)?
- Which family and friends are you closest with as a family?

#### Extended Family

- What is your relationship like with each close family member (e.g., mom, dad, brother, sister, grandparent)?
- What has changed with your extended family?

#### Learning

- What areas have you studied deeply to improve your family life and parenting?

- How are you finding time to study, read?
- How are your children engaged with learning?

Playing

- What kinds of activities is your family involved in together?
- How do you and your spouse interact with each other and the kids during times of play?

## **STEP 2: PLANNING**

After thinking through these questions and/or having a conversation with your spouse, pick three things that you would like to put into practice immediately in order to help move your family toward this vision. List them out here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

1. Read a Bible story book 3 times each week with my child.
2. Read one parenting book along with my spouse this year.
3. Set aside one date night each quarter to talk with my spouse about our kids' future.

### **STEP 3: ACCOUNTABILITY:**

Next, write these three things on an index card. Put it somewhere where you will see and read it regularly (like your car dashboard). Ask a friend to hold you accountable.

### **STEP 4: REVIEW:**

Pick a date six months from now to work through these questions again. Put it in your calendar. Put it on your spouse's calendar. How is your plan going? Are there things that need to be adjusted? Is it challenging enough? Is it too challenging? Make adjustments. Do you need to scrap your plan and start over (e.g. my kids are at a new stage, my family dynamics have changed)?



## FIRST STEPS, PART 3: YOU HAVE A FAMILY

He established a testimony in Jacob  
and appointed a law in Israel.

—Psalm 78:5a

Parents share their responsibility with the entire church community. Training children is a community project, because we need each other. We need one another's encouragement, one another's accountability, and one another's eyes to see what we can't see.

Every Sojourn member has a responsibility to the children who will be dedicated at the upcoming service. Friends and family who are not part of Sojourn but are part of the body of Christ will also be encouraged in this as well. So, after the children are presented, every Sojourn member present, along with family and friends who are members of Christ's body, will be asked to stand. Then, I will lead us with the following:

*Parents, look around you. You are not alone. This is your community of faith. Sojourn, will you commit to seek God and seek gospel change in the way you live before these children?*

*Will you commit to pray for these children—that they will grow to love Jesus and trust in Him?*

*Will you commit to teach them the gospel through both your words and your example?*

*Will you commit to partner with these parents—holding them accountable and confronting their sin?*

*Will you commit to pray for them and encourage them as they face the trials of parenting?*

*If so, please read the following:*

With joy and thanksgiving,  
As Christ's church,  
With God's help,  
We promise to love, encourage, and support you  
As you follow Christ and train your children in the faith.

## Your Kids and the Church Community

The family and the church were created to work together, but in many cases they do not. In many church contexts parents have handed over their biblically assigned role to let the “professionals” have the sole influence in the growth of their child. In other contexts, parents isolate from others and attempt to disciple their kids alone. We want to pursue a healthy balance. The family and the church need each other, like two pedals on a bike.

The church is an important part of God’s plan, and so is the family. Christ loved His Bride (the church) and ordained her with several

purposes. It is easy to understand the church's responsibility to teach adults, but notice that both family and church have been given the task to teach young people. It is my prayer that the local church will help in the following ways:

- To surround young people with godly adults who will both speak and model truth and love in a way that shapes the direction of your child's life (1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Peter 5:2).
- To reach out to and model the gospel for your child's friends and those you will meet who do not have Christian parents (Matthew 19:14; 28:19-20).
- To reinforce a biblical view of the world. Believe it or not, some children, though they hear truth for their parents time and again, will not hear it until it is shared by another believer (2 Timothy 4:2).
- To come along side of you and the Holy Spirit in working to bring about reconciliation in times of conflict (2 Corinthians 5:18).
- To encourage your child to know God and steward his/her giftings for God's glory (1 Corinthians 12).

But it is not only our kids that need the church. Parents need the church as well. When the responsibility to teach our children about God is overwhelming, the church is there to help. God showed parents great grace when he blessed them with the church community. The church is our partner in the task of teaching our children about God because it shares our need for God's presence and His truth.

**Discuss Together:** In what ways has the church come along side of you in times of need? How have you experienced the joys of serving God with your spouse/children? In what ways could the faith community be more involved/encouraging in your life?

We continually ask God to fill you  
with the knowledge of his will  
through all the wisdom and  
understanding that the Spirit gives,  
so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord  
and please him in every way:  
bearing fruit in every good work,  
growing in the knowledge of God,  
being strengthened with all power  
according to his glorious might  
so that you may have great endurance  
and patience, giving joyful thanks  
to the Father, who has qualified you  
to share in the inheritance  
of his holy people in the kingdom of light.  
For he has rescued us f  
rom the dominion of darkness  
and brought us into the kingdom  
of the Son he loves,  
in whom we have redemption,  
the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1: 9-14

