

Child Dedication

*By
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An Eternal Issue

A Human Being has been brought into this world. He/She is a living person that has just begun an eternal quest. They are a newly created life that has many challenges, victories, opportunities, oppositions, and disappointments that will face them on their journey. But more important than all else, is the fact that they are AN ETERNAL BEING!!! Even though the preparation, advantages, skills, etc. that can be given to them for their life on earth are all very important - the most important asset that can be given to a human being would obviously have Eternity in mind.

“The Most Important” asset/quality/goal/purpose/inheritance that a parent can give to their “NEW LIFE” is showing them how to prepare for their eternal future. Like all other humans, one day that child will stand at a ‘fork’ in the road of life. Depending upon which direction they choose, they will either spend their eternal existence in Heaven or Hell.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. Then he will say to those on his left, depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Matthew 25:34,41,46

As a parent, we play the most important role in our child's "Eternal Destiny"!! The most important heritage we can pass on to our children is a life of Teaching, Prayer, Discipline, and the Example which leads to God. That's a heritage that if given correctly, will result in our children living their Eternal Existence in Heaven.

What we can give to our children for their life on this earth is important. But we must always remember, the biggest portion of our child's future is 'An Eternal Issue'.

Dedication - What is it?

Webster defines the word 'Dedication' as follows:

"To set apart...or devote to a sacred purpose. To set apart seriously for a special purpose; devote to some work, duty, etc."

When referring to the dedication of a child, the true meaning of what is happening is centered in Love. Love needs to be the reason a parent will dedicate their child, as well as themselves, to a sacred purpose. That purpose is to devote themselves fully to the responsibility, work, and accountability that is involved in training a child. That training should result in the child having been formed and molded so they will 'naturally' give their life to Jesus and want to live for him once they understand what it is all about.

Child Dedication is the first of many steps which will result in the child being directed/channeled toward serving God.

It's First a Parental Choice

Dedication is really divided into a two-fold event. One element being the parents and their dedication to God. The other part surrounds the child, and the giving of that child to God.

Let's look at the Parental portion.

Only God knows what possibilities are wrapped up in an infant. And without God, a parent is without chart or compass in setting the course for their child's life. That new human life is the highest gift that can ever be given to us by God.

*"...they are the children God has graciously given"
Genesis 33:5*

*"Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward
from him."
Psalms 127:3*

*"Here am I, and the children the Lord has given me.
We are signs and symbols in Israel from the
mighty, who dwells on Mount Zion."
Isaiah 8:18*

“Jesus said, Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

Matthew 19:14

The responsibility of that gift is mind staggering. When God gives an item of value, He expects the person to whom that item (child) is given to be a good and faithful manager/steward. As parents, whether we like the idea or not, we will give account for the stewardship of our children.

“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

I Corinthians 4:2

“For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.”

Romans 14:7-8,12

In fact, God takes this thing so seriously, that one of the main reasons he chose Abraham to make covenant with was because Abraham could be trusted to raise his children correctly. God needed a lineage that would serve him and carry on the covenant that was being established.

“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the

way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”

Genesis 18:19

With the stewardship principle in mind, when a parent dedicates their child, this is what they are saying. (1) They accept that child as a gift from God, and they accept the responsibility of taking care of and watching over that child. (2) They will endeavor to raise him/her in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (3) They will give themselves 100% to seeing the child raised in a way that will direct the child into an acceptance of Jesus as their Savior. And then as they grow in maturity and understanding, they will very naturally give their life to Jesus as their Lord and Master.

Those things are done first of all via directly applying your faith, and instructing and teaching them. If we are honestly living our life for God, this first part will happen easily. It will be something that is practically automatic. What we Love, Believe In, and are Dedicated to - we live. We search it, talk it, apply it, refine it, discuss it, get excited about it, etc. We live it. It's our job as parents to be teaching our children about God. This can be started with the stories. Then the principles. And then the things he's teaching us. We need to make a point of doing it. Taking the time. Making the effort. We can't expect someone else to do it for you. This is our child - not someone else's. We will be held accountable as the steward of this gift - not someone else. We need to be teaching them how to pray, and call things by faith. It starts by us

doing it for them and over them. We speak the words of faith over their lives. As they get older we need to be believing God with them for their new toys, bike, video game, friends, etc. Pray and agree with them that God will find just the right one. Teach them how to exercise their faith and persevere. As they get older, we need to walk this christian life out with them. Directly telling them what the word has to say about their problems and challenges. Be in agreement with them. Using our faith to help them, and making sure it comes to pass in their lives.

Secondly, it's done by setting the correct example for the child to follow. In my opinion, this second part of setting the example seems to be more difficult for parents to do than the first part. So I'd like to dwell on this a little longer.

Many times parents will say, "You know my child(ren) didn't come with an instruction manual". I beg to differ. How irresponsible would it be of God to send an eternal being into the earth, place him/her in the care of parents who don't know what they're doing. All the while knowing that how they take care of this child will have eternal reverberations. He'd basically be saying,

"Well, I hope they get it right. If they don't, that poor child will spend an eternity away from me and in hell. Oh well, I guess it's up to them to figure it out. I'm not telling them how to do it."

Does that sound like a Loving God to you? If that were his attitude, he'd have some serious issues. There is an instruction manual. IT'S THE BIBLE. Everything we need to know is there. If you don't understand it, and can't figure out how to apply it to raising your family, go to your pastor and get some help. This is not a game. This is for keeps. Eternally.

Setting the example is extremely important.

*It's not the hearers of the word, but the doers who are wise, righteous, and not deceived.
(Matthew 7:24-27; Romans 2:13; James 1:22)*

I've watched parents who could quote all kinds of scripture and seemed to know all the principles of how to live for God. Yet they didn't live it. They didn't set the example, and their children grew up the same way. They knew a lot, but didn't live for God.

Then I've also seen parents who knew very little about how to really live for God. They had gotten saved late in life, and didn't know much about the things of God. But what they did know, they lived with all their Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength. It didn't take long their children get saved. Even the ones who were adults and had moved out of the house, gave their lives to God. And you know what, the whole family served God with everything in them. In my opinion, children will follow what their parents do more than what their parents say.

If all a parent does is say what needs to be done, but doesn't take the lead and do it - the child quickly recognizes the hypocrisy in the message and throws the whole thing out.

That's what Jesus was talking about when he talked about the teachers of the law and the Pharisees,

"...Obey...and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach"

Matthew 23:2-3

That philosophy simply doesn't produce good fruit that will last. (Matthew 7:24-27) If we want them to honestly and sincerely make Jesus their Lord, then we must set that example and show them how to do it. Live it in front of them. Show them how to put Jesus first in every area of their life.

Children need to see their parents wrestle with and overcome their flesh. Too often parents hide their inner struggles so completely from the child that they think their parents don't have a care in the world. Show them by example, how to force the flesh to submit.

They need to see their parents die to their flesh and give things up in their lives because those things don't please God. We tell our children that certain things in life are not of God and we can't participate in them. We must follow that with actions and give them up. Do our children see their parents set the example and live according to what they're telling their children? Or are there two different sets of rules in the

house? One for the adults/parents, and one for the children. Children need consistency. Anything else they will eventually perceive as hypocrisy.

Children need to watch mom and dad serve God on a consistent basis. Not just when it's convenient. In hard times and in good times, they need to watch their parents make God #1 in their lives. I grew up on a grain farm. Some years we had good crops, and other years we would dry out, or get hailed out, and there would be no crop at all. Never once did I hear my parents blame God for the problems. Never once did they ever indicate that they were going to back off on their commitment to God, if life's circumstances didn't change.

Our children need to see that we will serve God with ALL our Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength - no matter what the circumstances may be. God is, and always will be first in our lives.

Children need to see their parents read and study the word, pray, fast, praise & worship, go up to the prayer line for prayer, rejoice before the Lord, weep before the Lord, cry out for strength, seek for wisdom, persevere and not turn to the right or the left, not get off the path until they've received what they're believing for. They need to see their parents be faithful in tithing and giving offerings, helping the needy, going out of their way to minister someone - even when it is inconvenient.

YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO SEE YOU LIVE THIS THING!!

The example set must be one that says there is never going to be a choice as to whether we or our family is going to serve God. They need to see us set our course so that they know we have no plans of choosing hell, and neither does our family. Our attitude should be: we don't even have the right to make those choices. Sin, Rebellion, Stubbornness, Selfishness, Disobedience, Hell, Etc. should never be exemplified in our lives as choices that are even an option for us to make. Romans 8 says that if the Spirit of God lives in us, he will give life to our mortal bodies so that we can live above sin. It's not a choice. We won't consider it. Paul goes on to say:

"Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation - but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if you put to death the misdeed of the body, you will live."

Romans 8:12-13

We must take the mindset - We Are Not Our Own. We Don't Have The Right To Make Those Kinds Of Choices.

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

I Corinthians 6:19-20

"You were bought at a Price...."

I Corinthians 7:23

"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ...."

I Peter 1:18-19

Our children need to see us live that conviction, so they can imitate the same conviction in their lives. This is what we as parents are dedicating ourselves to. The principle of 'Imitation'. It's already set in scripture.

"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children."

Ephesian 5:1

God designed children to be imitators. It's a language of teaching and instilling principles. Children will imitate the bad and the good in their parents. As Christians, our job is to set an example like God set for us. He gave us everything we need to know to imitate him and be like him - via the scripture. As parents, we are to do the same with our children. Give them an example to imitate.

"Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. 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.”

Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:6-7

“Fathers, do no exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

Ephesians 6:4

In Ephesians, the word ‘training’ is the same word used in Hebrews 12:5 where the Father God is talking about handling us as his children. It is the KJV word ‘chastening’. Part of its definition is: “The whole training and instruction of a child”. Many of the things we learn and do as we are growing up we have not been told to do. We watched, learned, and imitated. It became part of our instruction and training. The example we set as parents will speak louder than our words in many, many areas.

The other word used in Ephesians: ‘Instruction’ - means “A putting into the mind”. Again, we can set an example that puts good or bad things into our child’s mind.

***THEY WILL BE AND DO - WHAT WE ARE AND ARE DOING.** A child can be compared to an arrow that the parent shoots from a bow. The end result is largely dependent on how the parent releases them.*

THE CHILD.

Reality is, that at some point of their lives, a child will be fully released to live on their own. Even though that is a process that begins many years before they move out, the fact is the time is coming they will live their own lives. That brings us to the second participant in the dedication service - The Child.

One of the clearest scriptures on this is found in I Samuel, chapter 1. It’s the story of a man named Elkanah and his wife Hannah. The scripture reveals that Hannah was barren. She asked God for a child and he granted her prayer. God gave a son to Hannah whom she named Samuel. The following verses describe what we would probably refer to as a Dedication Service.

“...She took the boy with her, ...and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh....they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, as surely as you live,...I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord...”

I Samuel 1:24-28

The concept behind ‘Giving the child to the Lord’ is this: It gives God the legal right to be the Master/Lord of the child’s life. That dedication is never to be taken back. It is for the ‘Whole Life’ of the child.

Another good example of this is found in Luke 2:22 when Mary and Joseph 'Presented' Jesus to God.

This concept is vitally important to a child's eternal destiny. We must realize that as human parents, God has not given us the right to secure heaven for our children. We can and need to do everything we can to point them in the right direction, and scripture promises that if we do that, in the end they will make the right choice. However, they are the ones who still need to make the choice. We play a very important role in their lives, but yet we can't do everything. Jesus told us that it's the Heavenly Father who alone is capable of bringing a person to salvation and eternal life.

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him...."

John 6:44

The reason we must come to Jesus is because Jesus said:

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one come to the Father except through me."

John 14:6

It's the Father who draws men and women to accept Jesus as their Savior. Let's face it - We can't get our child to heaven by ourselves. We need God's help. That is why we must give God the right to work in that child. We must give God the full right to work in our children as he sees fit. As Christians, we are all servants of God. Our children will need to establish that relationship with God also. Parents can get in the way of

that and put restrictions on how much God is allowed to do in their child's life. I repeat: we can literally get in God's way. We may think we're protecting them, but in reality we're destroying them. From our perspective, our choices are usually tied to how much we love our children and how we wouldn't want them to go through anything uncomfortable or painful in their lives. Heaven forbid that they should ever have to suffer in any way.

We Must Let God Be God!!

Remember, God Loves our child more than we ever can!!

As parents, we can either 'Bind' God from working in our children's lives; or we can 'Loose' God to work in their lives.

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Matthew 16:19

There are some things in life that we as humans will only learn through difficulty. That's why suffering is so important. Scripture says suffering produces 4 different things in our lives.

- (1) Maturity - 'Perfect' in KJV (Hebrews 2:10)*
- (2) Obedience (Hebrews 5:8)*
- (3) Done with Sin (I Peter 4:1)*
- (4) Love (I Corinthians 13:4 - KJV)*

Parents can be so 'protective' of their children, that they hinder God from working in their lives.

How we handle our child begins when he/she is a baby. It's part of putting the arrow of your child, into the bow so that eventually you can release them. Dedication is a step of releasing (Loosing) God to work in our children. We are giving him the right to do whatever is necessary for their best. We are taking one of the most important steps of faith that we can take for them at this age. WE ARE PLACING GOD IN CHARGE OR THEIR LIVES AND ETERNITY. The following scriptures explain why that is so vital.

"....Your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost."

Matthew 18:14

"You want something but don't get it....you do not have, because you do not ask."

James 4:2

"Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: The Lord knows those who are His."

II Timothy 2:19

"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Philippians 1:6

"....Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved - you and your household."

Acts 16:31

To God, there is nothing more important in the world than the life of a human being. If we are sincere when we dedicate our child, we can rest assured that God will do everything possible (in our life and our children) to bring that child into the most important asset they can attain - ETERNAL LIFE.

That child will need to eventually work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. (Philippians 2:12-13) We need to give them every tool possible to ensure they will do it the right way. The Dedication of our child is the beginning of that whole process.

DEDICATION VS. INFANT BAPTISM

Many times the question is asked, "Why do you dedicate and not baptize?" That is a very good and sincere question. I will answer it as lovingly, yet as straight-forwardly as possible.

The reason we don't baptize infants here at Word of Life is because it cannot be supported by Scripture. It's not in the Bible. There is not one instance in scripture that teaches, shows, or even indicates that God desires Infant Baptism. Since it is not scriptural, it carries absolutely no value for the child or the parent. In fact, it can do more harm than good.

Through infant baptism, parents can find themselves putting their trust in the baptism for the salvation of the child. So they let down in other areas of the child's spiritual life, because they honestly believe the child is now going to make heaven because they were baptized as infants. There is nothing in scripture to support that belief. It is false doctrine.

I believe this for 2 reasons. (1) Infant baptism (or adult baptism for that matter) has nothing to do with us securing salvation. We Are Not Saved Through Water Baptism. The Bible says salvation comes by faith and making Jesus the Lord of our lives. (Romans 3; 10:9-10; Galatians 3; John 1:12; 14:6; Ephesians 2:8-9; I John 1:9; 5:12)

(2) The second reason is I cannot substantiate the fact that a baby is a "Sinner" in God's sight. Biblically, a person becomes a 'sinner' (and their eternal salvation is in jeopardy) once they begin to sin. Romans 5:12 is usually the verse that is construed to say that we're sinners from birth. Without going into a dissertation of the verse, let me just say - all the points usually used to prove that verse is saying a baby is a sinner at birth, are contradicted in the following 2 verses. (verses 13-14) Babies are not born sinners. They are born with a sinful nature and because of the curse of death put on the human race, they are subject to the curse of death - even as a baby. But sin is something we personally commit and must answer for. We are not considered sinners, and have to answer for sin because of what our parents did or vice/versa.

"For every soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son - both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die. But suppose this son has a son who sees all the sins his father commits, and though he sees them, he does not do such things: He will not die for his father's sin; he will surely live. But his father will die for his own sin. The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him."

Ezekiel 18:4,14,17-18a,20

Scripturally, becoming a sinner is a process that takes place over years in a child's life. It comes via growing through a stage in their life called "The age of accountability". As a child grows older, they slowly become increasingly aware of the concept of right and wrong. They learn what is right, what is wrong, and that there are consequences for wrong action. As the child matures and learns of God, Satan, Heaven, & Hell, they begin to understand the purpose and meaning of all that is involved with good and evil - right and wrong. As that maturity and understanding increases, so does the personal accountability. A child can be mature enough and even understand enough to honestly and sincerely repent of their sins and accept Jesus as their Savior as young as 3-4 years

old. However, in God's sight, that child will not be 'FULLY' accountable for their actions until the age of 20. (Numbers 14) Presuming the individual is mentally capable.

A child becoming 'fully accountable' for themselves as a sinner is a gradual process that takes place over a number of years. When a child is a baby (or even the early years of life), there is no possible way they can understand and comprehend the principles of right and wrong, good and evil, God and Satan, Heaven and Hell. If a child can't understandingly commit a sin, they can't be considered guilty of sin. Therefore, they are what the scripture refers to as 'Innocent' and without sin. If a child dies in that condition, they would undeniably go directly to heaven!!

Without an understanding of the big picture, a child cannot make a legitimate, moral choice for right or wrong in every area of life. That comes slowly, over years. They learn a little at a time. They realize they are being disobedient, a little at a time. As they comprehend the basic concept of obedience and disobedience, the Holy Spirit will now begin to convict them, and they can be saved. However, they still don't have a concept of the big picture of life. That too will come a little at a time. The Bible doesn't seem to be very interested in establishing a child's salvation. It is because the child has not committed any sin. It is not possible for them to be condemned to hell at that point of their lives. They are not sinners. However, the Bible does place a heavy emphasis on an honest/sincere dedication of both the child and their parents

to God. That's why we choose to 'Dedicate' rather than baptize.

A SOLEMN MOMENT FOLLOWED BY LIFE-LONG COMMITMENT.

The moments that are spent before a minister in the Child Dedication Service are to be considered very Holy, Sacred, and Special. It is a time comparable to when Samuel and Jesus were presented before God. Treasure the moment and allow it to be etched into your spirit and mind. It is a precious time that you'll always be able to look back to and tie your faith to in the future.

Through out that child's life, Satan and the demonic realm will try to steal and destroy that new life. A dedicated parent can always reflect back to that Dedication Service and reaffirm the rights, privileges, and Godly Ownership of that child. We as parents can literally win many spiritual battles on behalf of the child, when our faith has a locking-pin to hang on to. Those moments of standing before the Lord and publicly dedicating both parents and child - can act as that altar where something was settled between you and God. The thing that is being settled is the eternal destiny of your child.

It's a definite starting point to the rest of the child's life. Remember: the Dedication Service is as much for the parents as it is for the child. Not only is the child being given to God,

but we as parents must also give ourselves to God in Dedication. That's how the true purpose of the service is accomplished.

A child is an eternal being. Raising them correctly is a matter of ETERNAL LIFE or ETERNAL DEATH.