

## **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PARENT-CHILD DEDICATION AND BAPTISM?**

This is a question many parents have regarding their newborn infant and young child. And since families come from various religious and cultural backgrounds this explanation has been prepared. This dedication is not a Baptism. It is not a sacrament. It does not impart salvation to the child.

### **Parent-Child Dedication/Dedication of Children**

This opportunity is actually best understood as a Parent Commitment – a promise of parents to offer their child (usually in infancy) to the Lord and to dedicate themselves to the raising of the child for the glory of God. It is fundamental that the parents choosing to commit themselves to raising their child in this way have a clear personal testimony themselves of their own faith in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation.

The dedication of children is seen in some passages in the Bible. Hannah dedicated her son, Samuel, to the Lord (*1 Samuel 1:21-28*). As a baby, Jesus was dedicated by his parents (*Luke 2:22-25*). Jesus also bestowed 'blessings of the children' (*Mark 10:13-16*). So, a Child Dedication / Parent Commitment is viewed as a confirming step between the parents and the church to raise the child in a Godly way so that the child may be nurtured toward making his/her own decision of personally accepting Christ as Savior and Lord.

### **Purposes behind a Parent Commitment/Child Dedication**

1. To give parents of young children opportunity to recognize God's gift of a child to them. (*Psalms 127:3*)
2. Parents' declaration of their intent to raise their child in an atmosphere honoring Jesus Christ. (*Deut. 6:5-7*)
3. A challenge for parents to guide and educate their child in Jesus and to lay a foundation of learning about God. (*Eph. 6:4*)

As parents we cannot "decide" our child's salvation for them. Each person must make their own decision about their relationship with Christ. When a child becomes old enough to understand the concept of sin and their responsibility for that sin before God, he/she is then ready to make a decision about salvation.

Parents can, however, lay a foundation by their teaching and example that helps their child to be ready to make that decision when the time comes. An illustration of this is marriage. We don't decide when or if our child will marry and we can't guarantee them a happy marriage. However, our positive example, faithful instruction, and Godly guidance can lay a foundation for them making a good decision when that day comes.