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For more helpful resources, including PDF forms that you can customize, notes and outlines for the Parenting Foundation and Baptism Classes, and even video and audio links of dedication services, see Truth78.org/dedication-baptism-resources

Sample

Introduction to this Guide

To be trusted by God to raise His image bearers in the fear and joy of the Lord is an unspeakable privilege. Because parents and church leaders share this responsibility, it is important for there to be a true spirit of partnership and cooperation between the church and home.¹

This guide is meant to be a companion to the booklets *Dedicated to the Lord* and *Established in the Faith*, both of which are available through Truth78.org. These two companion booklets outline the biblical principles and vision behind the dedication of children and, when the time is right, preparation for baptism. This information for child dedication and youth baptism is not only intended to help church leaders make the most of these milestones, but it is also intended to do this in a way that promotes partnership and maximizes the impact for all who are involved in the process.

Though there are other milestones, there is a uniqueness and connection between child dedication and baptism. The dedication of children anticipates their baptism. Parents dedicate their children in the hope that they will, as explained in *Dedicated to the Lord*, “belong wholly to Jesus Christ forever.”² One of the promises that parents make is to regularly pray that, by God’s grace, their child “will come to trust Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of his/her sins and for the fulfillment of all His promises to him/her, even eternal life and in this faith follow Jesus as Lord and obey His teachings.”³ This promise links to the questions the child will be asked when, Lord willing, he is baptized several years later: “Are you now trusting in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins and the fulfillment of all His promises to you, even eternal life?”⁴ and “Do you intend, with God’s help, to obey Jesus’ teachings and to follow Him as your Lord?”⁵

1 In pages 35-43 of the book, *Zealous: 7 Commitments for the Discipleship of the Next Generations* by David Michael, commitment #2 is “Foster a Robust Partnership Between Church and Home.” This chapter provides the biblical foundation for the shared calling and responsibility of the church and home for the discipleship of the next generation. (This booklet is available through Truth78.org.)

2 This is from the concluding words of the dedication on page 44 in *Dedicated to the Lord: Five Parental Promises for the Faithful Discipleship of Children*.

3 *Ibid.*, 38.

4 This is from the first of three questions that affirm faith in Christ on page 34 in *Established in the Faith: A Discipleship Guide for Discerning and Affirming a Young Person’s Faith*.

5 *Ibid.*, 35 (from the second of the three questions).

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As the title of this guide suggests, it has been prepared to serve church leaders who are responsible for planning and overseeing child dedication services and/or the baptism of young people. The content has been drawn from 23 years of experience in two different churches. In both churches, the dedication of children and preparation of young people for baptism were connected to and designed to reinforce the biblical vision for the discipleship of the next generation that we were pursuing in those churches.⁶ Certainly, the preparation process, content of the instruction, communication, and service details should be adapted to fit the unique traditions and culture of each church. We are happy for these tools and various forms of communication to be adapted and used to effectively serve the church. May God bless your efforts for His glory and for the comprehensive discipleship and everlasting joy of the next generations.

⁶ This biblical vision for discipleship is unpacked in the book *Zealous: 7 Commitments for the Discipleship of the Next Generation*.

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Child Dedication Approach and Process

Introduction

In *Dedicated to the Lord*, a companion booklet to this guide, I stated that the “dedication of children is an act of faith in the presence of God and His people in which we solemnly and earnestly offer our children up to God for His wise and sovereign purposes in their lives, and offer ourselves up to God for the holy responsibility of being biblical parents and raising our children in the fear, knowledge, and joy of the Lord.”⁷ Though not mandated in Scripture, I want to commend the public dedication of children in the church and offer some practical guidance for the overseeing pastor or church leader.

Alongside the reasons and practical benefits given in *Dedicated to the Lord*,⁸ the dedication service is an opportunity to promote a biblical vision for the next generation and to reinforce personal and corporate responsibility for the faithful and comprehensive discipleship of the children growing up in the church.

Although I wasn’t the preaching pastor for the two churches I served, as a next-generation pastor with responsibility for child dedication services, I was assured of having the congregational ear for at least 10-15 minutes every three months. In planning each service, I wanted to make every second count for casting vision and calling for commitment from dedicating parents and from the congregation. In my experience, the dedication service, the parent preparation for it, and the follow-up afterward proved to be one of the most effective ways to inspire and impart a biblical understanding of next-generation ministry in the church.

⁷ This is from the working definition of child dedication on page 8 in *Dedicated to the Lord*.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

Sample

Child Dedication Resources and Sample Documents

Parental Promises for the Dedication of Children (in Question Format)

1. Do you recognize these children as gifts of God and give heartfelt thanks for God's blessing?
2. Do you now dedicate your children to the Lord who gave them to you, surrendering all worldly claims upon their lives in the hope that they will belong wholly to Jesus Christ forever?
3. Do you pledge, with God's fatherly help, to bring up these children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, making every effort, with faithfulness, patience, and love, to build the Word of God, the character of Christ, and the joy of the Lord into their lives?
4. Do you promise to provide, through God's blessing, for the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs of your children, looking to your own heavenly Father for the wisdom, love, and strength to serve and not use them?
5. Do you promise, God helping you, to make it your regular prayer that, by God's grace, your children will come to trust in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of their sins and for the fulfillment of all His promises to them, even eternal life, and in this faith follow Jesus as Lord and obey His teachings?

Pastoral Pronouncement

Together with your parents who love you dearly and this congregation that cares about the outcome of your faith, I dedicate you to God, surrendering together with them all worldly claims upon your life in the hope that you will belong wholly to Jesus Christ forever.

Sample Young Baptism Approach and Process

Introduction

In this guide, I am proposing an approach that brings church and home together for the preparation of a young person for baptism. In the introduction to *Established in the Faith*, a companion booklet to this guide, I wrote how this approach to baptism preparation grew out of my desire to be faithful to my calling as a father and shepherd in my home. Most church leaders affirm that parents have primary responsibility for the discipleship of their children, but we can sometimes unwittingly communicate that the parents' job is to get their kids to church and let the *professionals* take it from there. Church leadership is responsible to oversee the ordinance of baptism, but it is important that we fulfill that responsibility without overlooking the significant responsibility, privilege, and blessing that belongs to parents. This is the main reason I am promoting this approach, but there are other practical reasons as well.

I am persuaded that, when parents are involved, the young person (hereafter referred to as "student") is often better prepared. The parent knows the student better. They are more likely to see evidence of grace and spiritual growth, which can be affirmed in the preparation process. Parents are also more likely to observe patterns of sin and unbelief, which also can be addressed.

Since one of the priorities in baptism preparation is to discern if the student is born again, it makes sense that we would involve the people in that preparation who have observed the student the most. In Matthew 7:13-23, Jesus makes clear that the way we discern the difference between a person who is truly on the narrow path that leads to life and the person who is on the broad path that leads to destruction is by the fruit of that person's life. Healthy trees (true children of God in Christ) bear good fruit. Diseased trees (those dead in their sins) bear bad fruit. We cannot depend upon good behavior (verse 15) or upon the words they may say or do (verse 22). A parent has more

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Youth Baptism Resources and Sample Documents

Sample Proposal for a Revised Baptism Preparation Process

Proposal

1. That the elders establish the proposed process for preparing young people (under age 18) for baptism at our church as outlined in the “Preparing Young People for Baptism and Church Membership: An Overview for Parents and Church Leaders” document following this proposal.
2. To ask every candidate for baptism to respond publicly to the following questions:

Are you now trusting in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins and for the fulfillment of all His promises to you, even eternal life?

Do you renounce Satan in all his works and all his ways?

Do you intend, with God’s help, to obey Jesus’ teachings and to follow Him as your Lord and obey His teachings?

and to publicly baptize candidates in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with wording similar to this:

On your profession of faith in Jesus Christ and in obedience to His command, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

3. That children be encouraged (or required) to wait until at least age 11 before being baptized.
 - This is a recommendation, not a requirement.
 - There is no biblical instruction concerning a minimum age for baptism.

Raising children in the fear and joy of the LORD is an unspeakable privilege and a responsibility shared by parents and church leaders. It is important for there to be a true spirit of partnership and cooperation between the church and home. Both child dedication and youth baptism provide opportunities in the life of a church to not only make the most of these milestones, but to do so in a way that promotes partnership and maximizes the impact for all involved in the processes.

This guide is a companion to *Dedicated to the Lord* and *Established in the Faith*, drawn from 23 years of experience in two churches. The approach to the dedication and baptism of children outlined here is designed to serve pastors and church leaders with a helpful framework while also promoting and reinforcing a biblical vision for the discipleship of the next generation.

... Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments! His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. (Psalm 112:1-2)

David Michael is the Executive Director of Truth78. He served over three decades in pastoral ministry and co-founded Truth78 with his wife, Sally, to promote the faithful discipleship of the next generation in the church and home. This vision and mission have been shaped by the theological and doctrinal commitments formed under the preaching and teaching of John Piper, his pastor and ministry colleague for 33 years. David and Sally have two daughters, a son-in-law, and three grandchildren. They live in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Truth78 is a vision-oriented ministry for the next generations—that they may know, honor, and treasure God, setting their hope in Christ alone, so that they will live as faithful disciples for the glory of God.

