

Parental Information for Dedication of Children at New Hope Town

What is the biblical purpose and history of child dedication?

- The scriptural root of a child dedication is found in 1 Samuel 1:27–28 (NASB), where a godly woman named Hannah prayed year after year for God to give her a child. He answered her prayer and she gave birth to a son, whom she named Samuel. When Samuel was born, Hannah prayed these words:
- *"For this boy I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of Him. So I have also dedicated him to the Lord; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord."*
- In Luke chapter 2 of the New Testament, following the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph took the infant Jesus to the temple and dedicated Him.
- In both Scripture passages, the parents entrusted their child completely to God.
- The writings of Moses found in Deuteronomy 6:5–9 describe God's plan for how a parent should raise up a child:
- *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 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. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."*
- One key step in marking your desire to nurture your child in the ways of God is to dedicate him or her to God publicly, through a child dedication ceremony.

Do I need to be a Covenant Member of New Hope Town to have my child dedicated?

- You do not need to be a member of New Hope Town to have your child dedicated in a group or public ceremony at Town. We do encourage parents to make sure they are calling Town their home church. Why? In dedicating your child to God, you are stating that you are willing to partner with God *and the church* to raise your child in cooperation with God's intentions. To partner with any church, a parent would be wise to decide if he or she agrees with its beliefs and vision, so they can be all-in in their partnership with the church.
- When you choose to become a member at Town, you are stating that you agree with NHT's beliefs and values, and that you want Town to be your home church. For more information on membership, visit the membership page.
- To have your child dedicated at NHT:
 - We ask parents to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
 - We ask parents to be sure their beliefs line up with our statement of faith.
 - We ask parents to be regular attenders of Town's weekend services.
 - We ask parents who are living together and who are not married to take steps to acknowledge and surrender to God's plan for their relationship before participating in a child dedication service.

- We are open to having conversations with you on any of the above statements. If you are interested, contact Daniel Pak at 808-888-0250

What can I expect during the child dedication ceremony?

- During the dedication service, parents express vows before God, their family, and the church, declaring their desire to raise their child in a God-honoring way. Because parents are the key role models for their children, they play a primary role in the dedication service.
- Parents will be asked to affirm the following commitments:
 - Do you receive this child with gratitude, as God's gift to you and your family?
 - Do you commit to each other as parents, creating a stable environment in which your child can mature? Will you make a covenant to strengthen your marriage relationship?
 - Do you commit to be parents of personal faith, recognizing your children are more likely to follow God's path by the model they first observe in you?
 - Do you commit to lead a faith-filled home that honors God in all your relationships and in the choices you make in spiritually growing your family?
 - Do you commit to be parents with patience, recognizing that with your inherent strengths and weaknesses, your desire to shape your child is a loving act that will require time, prayer, and God in order to produce in your children what He and you hope for?
 - If you have registered to participate in a scheduled public or group child dedication service, you will receive an email approximately two weeks before the date of the service with information regarding what to expect, including the service order and times.

Does New Hope Town baptize infants?

- Scripture provides evidence that Baptism follows an individual's decision to trust Christ alone for salvation (Acts 2:41, 8:12, and 10:47–48). And the New Testament records the baptisms of adult believers only.
- In the Bible, we find parents bringing their children to Jesus. He held them, prayed for them, and told us to welcome them. But He did not baptize them and He did not tell anyone else to baptize them. New Hope Town believes Baptism is for those who have made a personal decision to trust Christ alone for their salvation, once they have the maturity and ability to understand what that means.
- Dedication is not a sacrament; nor does it impart grace or salvation to a child.

Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ as each person recognizes their sinfulness and receives forgiveness and eternal life through Christ and His work on the cross.

- Rather than baptizing infants or children, Town encourages Christian parents to dedicate their children. This is a ceremony in which parents formally call upon God's blessing for their child and publicly commit to raise him or her in accordance with Scripture.

At what age can a child take place in a dedication service?

- While Town does not have a set age requirement for child dedication, the average age for a child to be dedicated is four to eight months old, although many parents dedicate children much older than that, often for the following reasons:
 - The parent(s) are new believers in Christ and their children were not dedicated when they were infants.
 - The parent(s) are having a younger child dedicated and want to have their older child dedicated at the same time.

Can a single parent participate in a dedication ceremony?

- Yes! Child dedication signifies the commitment of parents (including single parents) to do their best to raise their child to be a follower of Christ. Additionally, we highly encourage single parents to dedicate their child as they commit themselves to raise him or her without the presence or partnership of a spouse. The decision to dedicate a child is not dependent upon the beliefs of the ex-spouse; however we encourage single parents to discuss child dedication with their ex-spouse. Ideally, both parents—even if not married—would still commit to the dedication of their child to God. We acknowledge that this is often not possible, and that it takes extra effort for a single parent to raise a child. As a church, New Hope Town is committed to supporting single parents in providing a Christian foundation for their child's upbringing.

Can parent(s) assign godparents?

- Although the term "godparent" is not used in the Bible, we do welcome parents to invite friends and family members committed to supporting them to stand with them during the dedication. The presence of these significant adults symbolizes their commitment to play a supportive role in the child's spiritual development.