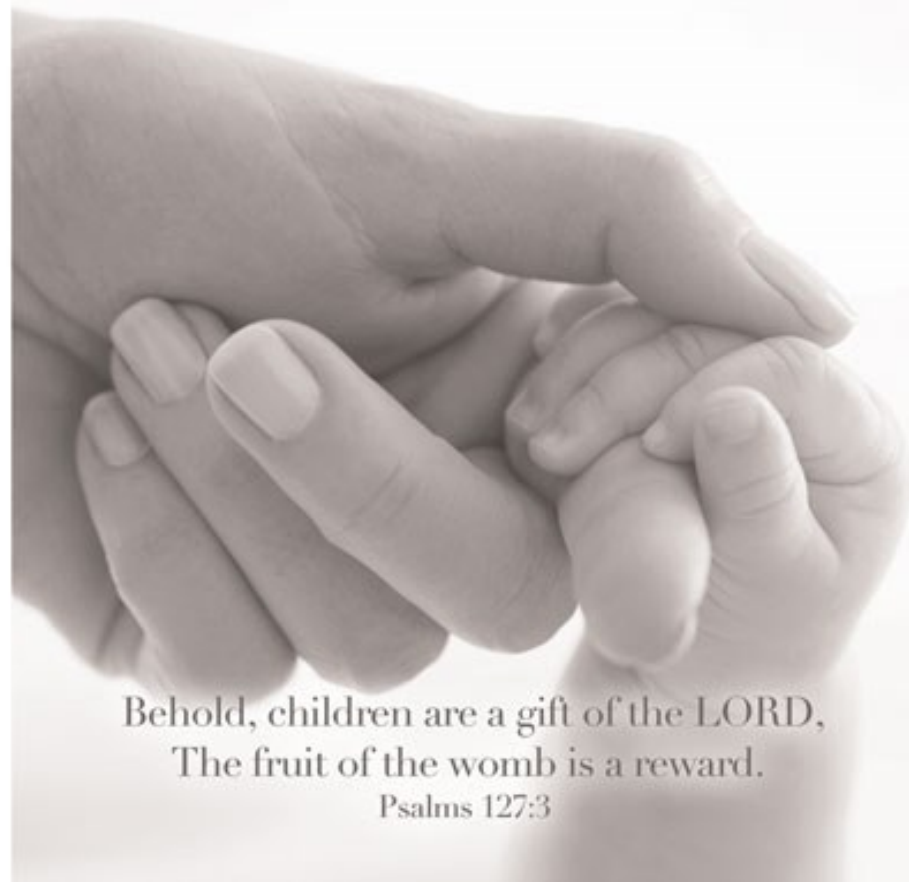


BABY *Dedication*



Behold, children are a gift of the LORD,
The fruit of the womb is a reward.

Psalms 127:3

Dear Parents,

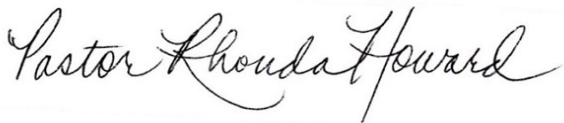
We are glad about your decision to dedicate your child to the Lord. The Bible says children are a heritage from God. To pass on a Godly heritage, God entrusts our children to us as a gift from Him and asks us to teach them His Word and be an example of faithfulness to Him in our daily lives.

As pastors, we would like to agree with you, along with TLC's family, as you make this serious commitment to train your child in the way they should go.

Please read over the material, giving prayerful thought and meditation as you plan to make this public declaration of your personal dedication and commitment to God in the raising of your child. Please call the church office at 580-224-0777 with any questions and so we can discuss a date for this special event.

What an honor it is to be entrusted by God to pass on His heritage!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Rhonda Howard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The word "Pastor" is written in a smaller, more upright script, while "Rhonda Howard" is written in a larger, more elaborate cursive script.

Rhonda Howard
Lead Pastor

23. Faith. *"I pray that faith will find root and grow in my children's hearts, that by faith they may gain what has been promised to them."* (Luke 17:5-6, Hebrews 11:1-4)

24. A servant's heart. *"God, please help my children develop a servants' heart, that they may serve wholeheartedly, as if they were serving the Lord, not men."* (Ephesians 6:7)

25. Hope. *"May the God of hope grant that my children may overflow with hope and hopefulness by the power of the Holy Spirit."* (Romans 15:13)

26. Willingness and ability to work. *"Teach my children, Lord, to value work and to work at it with all their hearts, as working for the Lord, not for men."* (Colossians 3:23)

27. Passion for God. *"Lord, please instill in my children a soul that 'followeth hard after thee'."* (Psalm 63:8 KJV)

28. Self-discipline. *"Father, I pray that my children may acquire a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair."* (Proverbs 1:3)

29. Prayerfulness. *"Grant, Lord, that my children's lives may be marked by prayerfulness, that they may learn to pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests."* (Ephesians 6:18)

30. Gratitude. *"Help my children to live lives that are always overflowing with thankfulness and always giving thanks to God, the Father, for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Ephesians 5:20, Colossians 2:7)

31. A heart of missions. *"Lord, please help my children to develop a desire to see Your glory declared among the nations, Your marvelous deeds among all peoples."* (Psalm 96:3)

BABY DEDICATION

Having a newborn baby is a life-changing experience. That baby is a living eternal soul that is precious in the eyes of God. The Bible says that children are a heritage from the Lord, and that the fruit of the womb is a reward (Psalm 127:3). Therefore, since children are a heritage, it is our role as a parent/parents to raise them according to Biblical principals, and not according to the world's mannerisms. Baby dedication is Biblical, but it is only the *beginning* of a life-long commitment to the Lord and to our children. The following handout will outline some basic obligations as a parent, and hopefully refute some misconceptions about baby dedication.

IS BABY DEDICATION THE SAME AS BABY BAPTISM?

No. The word *dedicate* as mentioned in the Bible means to "teach, initiate, dedicate, pronounce clean, consecrate to God, to hallow and show oneself holy." In contrast, *baptism* means "to overwhelm, dip, submerge, immense." There are no scriptures which support or mention a baby being baptized. Before being baptized, the child or adult must be a believer first, of his or her own free will, accepting Jesus Christ as his/her personal Savior and Lord.

At TLC, we are delighted to stand in agreement with parents and dedicate their children to the Lord as implied in the scriptures. Joseph and Mary presented Jesus, their first born son, to the Lord in Jerusalem. Yet, He was not baptized until he was 30 years old. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, dedicated her son to the Lord in this story: *After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, "As surely as you live, my lord, 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." And he worshiped the Lord there.* (1 Samuel 1:24-28)

The decision to dedicate your child(ren) to God is a serious one that should only come after much consideration and prayer. You are making a vow to the Lord in saying, “Lord, You gave us this child. We release them to You in faith and trust that You will take care of them, and we take our responsibility as parents to raise them in Your ways and to set a godly example of love and training.” See, our children belong to God. Abraham knew that Isaac did not belong to him, and when God asked for him back, Abraham obeyed – only to get to share in his life after all. They have been entrusted to our care for a short season, but their nurturing and training is to prepare them for eternity.

Deuteronomy 23:21-23 says that if you make a vow to the Lord, one should be careful to promptly fulfill your vow that you promise to Him. If you do not, you will be guilty of sin. One may say, “That sounds harsh.” However, when a person dedicates someone or something to God, God is always faithful to do His part, and we also have a responsibility, especially in child-rearing.

While God does not ask for us to be perfect parents, He does desire that we offer the best to our children by following His example as a Father. Remember, whether you are married or if you are a single parent, you are not raising the child alone. The Lord partners with us to give us wisdom, guidance, grace and love to give to our children. He further provides a church family that is a vital part of helping to support the parent and child.

HOW DO I TRAIN MY CHILD IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD?

We are commanded to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Deuteronomy 31:12 & 13; Ephesians 6:4). But going to church once a week is not enough. Children are a blessing from God meant to bring joy, reward, and fulfillment to the parents. The time and energy spent laying a foundation of faith and righteousness in their lives will later pay large dividends as they develop into responsible men and women of God. As mentioned previously, God

11. Faithfulness. *“Let love and faithfulness never leave my children, but bind these twin virtues around their necks and write them on the tablet of their hearts.”* (Proverbs 3:3)

12. Courage. *“May my children always be strong and courageous in their character and in their actions.”* (Deuteronomy 31:6)

13. Purity. *“Create in them a pure heart, O God, and let that purity of heart be shown in their actions.”* (Psalm 51:10)

14. Kindness. *“Lord, may my children always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

15. Generosity. *“Grant that my children may be generous and willing to share, and so lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age.”* (1 Timothy 6:18-19)

16. Peace-loving. *“Father, let my children make every effort to do what leads to peace.”* (Romans. 14:19)

17. Joy. *“May my children be filled with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.”* (1 Thessalonians 1:6)

18. Perseverance. *“Lord, teach my children perseverance in all they do, and help them especially to run with perseverance the race marked out for them.”* (Hebrews 12:1)

19. Humility. *“God, please cultivate in my children the ability to show true humility toward all.”* (Titus 3:2)

20. Compassion. *“Lord, please clothe my children with the virtue of compassion.”* (Colossians 3:12)

21. Responsibility. *“Grant that my children may learn responsibility, for each one should carry his own load.”* (Galatians 6:5)

22. Contentment. *“Father, teach my children the secret of being content in any and every situation, through Him who gives them strength.”* (Philippians 4:12-13)

WHAT DO I PRAY FOR MY CHILD?

- 1. Salvation.** *“Lord, let salvation spring up within my children (grandchildren), that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.”* (Isaiah 45:8, 2 Timothy 2:10)
- 2. Growth in Grace.** *“I pray that my children may grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”* (2 Peter 3:18)
- 3. Love.** *“Grant, Lord, that my children may learn to live a life of love, through the Spirit who dwells in them.”* (Galatians 5:25, Ephesians 5:2)
- 4. Honesty and Integrity.** *“May integrity and honesty be their virtue and their protection.”* (Psalm 25:21)
- 5. Self-control.** *“Father, help my children not to be like many others around them, but let them be alert and self-controlled in all they do.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:6)
- 6. Love for God’s Word.** *“May my children grow to find Your Word more precious than much pure gold and sweeter than honey from the comb.”* (Psalm 19:10)
- 7. Justice.** *“God, help my children to love justice as You do and act justly in all they do.”* (Psalm 11:7, Micah 6:8)
- 8. Mercy.** *“May my children always be merciful, just as their Father is merciful.”* (Luke 6:36)
- 9. Respect (for self, others, authority).** *“Father, grant that my children may show proper respect to everyone, as your Word commands.”* (1 Peter 2:17)
- 10. Biblical self-esteem.** *“Help my children develop a strong self-esteem that is rooted in the realization that they are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.”* (Ephesians 2:10)

has set forth practical helpful instruction to us as parents. The following lists a few, but can be summarized by saying that God wants us to love them. By loving them, we also discipline and teach because we love them. It requires spending time and making a deep investment in their lives.

BASIC TIPS

1. Love your children.

The successful Christian home is characterized by an atmosphere of love. We fail if we are faithful only to teach and to discipline, while neglecting to cultivate a relationship of love. One way that a parent may demonstrate love to their children is by touch. Even as kids approach the teen years, frequent hugs and affection are important. Second, spending time with your kids produces genuine relationships and conveys your love for them. There is no adequate substitute for spending quality time with our children. Third, we are to have fun with them. Laughing together and doing things that the children enjoy are important. Fourth, we must be active listeners who are interested in their well-being. Fifth, parents must assure their children of their value and self-worth, being careful to identify the good and positive qualities in their lives. Most importantly, we must love our children with the love of God, as defined in 1 Corinthians 13. God is always faithful to give us His advice and expertise. We are never alone.

2. Teach and train your children.

Sometimes more than what we say, our children learn by our example. We cannot expect them to have a heart for God and develop spiritually if we ourselves do not have a close personal relationship with Christ. By taking them to church regularly, living a life that is surrendered to the Lord and following God’s plan for our lives, we set a good example. They watch what we do and listen to what we say by instruction. But they learn by the example that is set before them. For example, when a child witnesses a parent willingly and joyfully reading his/her Bible, praying, attending church, serving and being a

witness for Christ in their community, and sharing the love of God, that tells the child their parents have a deep relationship with the Lord.

3. Discipline your children.

The philosophy of humanism, with its various schools of psychology, has greatly erred in assuming the inherent goodness of man. Society has also erred in teaching that parents should not discipline or correct verbally. As parents, we must readily submit to God's method of raising our children so that they too might "live" and bring glory to God. We must diligently instruct, train, and discipline our offspring, bringing them into subjection to the ways and principles of God. The goal of all instruction and discipline is that our children would love and honor the Lord and obey His commandments. Discipline has a two-fold purpose: to punish, and to correct. Through appropriate punishment, our child learns the vital lesson that if we disobey rules or instruction, there are consequences. The other aim of discipline is to produce a correction in the child's attitude or behavior (Hebrews 12:11). It is to restore him to a place of humility and obedience which will point Him towards the Lord. The nature of children demands correction. Left to themselves, they gravitate toward sin, selfishness and rebellion. Discipline checks the expression of the sin nature, structuring the child's development around righteousness, obedience, and morality. Discipline is not optional, it is required. All parents are under God's delegated authority and commandments to raise their children according to His principles. They must be disciplined whenever there is deliberate disobedience, unacceptable carelessness, or display of rebellion.

BASIC GUIDELINES FOR DISCIPLINE AND TRAINING

1. Parental agreement.

"Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Both parents must agree to the biblical approach to discipline and support one another, being careful not to ever disagree in front of the child.

2. Be realistic in your expectations.

God's behavior toward us is based on understanding. We likewise, must not expect more of our children than they can realistically give.

3. The role of reproof.

"He who regards reproof will be honored." (Proverbs 13:18)

Some foolish or careless behavior may not reflect disobedience or warrant discipline. In such cases, reproof is a more effective and realistic form of correction.

4. Make discipline proportionate.

"A just weight is His delight." (Proverbs 11:1)

Our reaction to a child's unacceptable behavior must be in proportion to the transgression involved. Overcorrecting may "provoke...your children to anger" or produce discouragement (Colossians 3:21).

5. Instruction is important.

Telling and modeling the appropriate behavior as defined in the Word is important. Training and teaching takes time. Don't discipline in anger or out of a desire to inflict harm upon the child.

a. Discipline disobedience immediately and begin when they are small.

b. Reaffirm your love and the love of the Father. It is important to explain to the child what they did wrong in a way they can understand. Encourage them to pray and ask God for forgiveness. Always reaffirm your love and God's love for them and how God has a wonderful plan for their life. Help the child to understand reconciliation with others, and then move forward, not holding the previous offense against the child.

c. Pray with your child.

This reading material only provides basic fundamentals for proper parenting. Being a parent, especially today, is filled with tremendous challenges. But remember, God partners with us. We must do our best and trust Him to fill in the holes. Pray for and with your children daily, and strive to maintain a peaceful environment within your home.