



# CONSIDERATIONS FOR *child dedications*

*10 simple ways to get started*

## 1. BEYOND BABYHOOD

Dedicating a child is an important part of our faith. It's our commitment to God, in the presence of the church, to raise our children in the ways of the Lord. Many children who joined their families by way of the system did not have an opportunity to be dedicated as a baby. This can also be true for families who came to Christ when their children were older. Be intentional in communicating that dedication is valuable and open to all children, no matter their age. You may even change the name from Baby Dedication to Child Dedication.

## 2. INVITE AND INCLUDE

Without a personal invitation, some families may not know whether or not they should participate in child dedications. While adoption day is a legal commitment to raise a child, dedication is a spiritual one. Intentionally include adoptive families in child dedications.

## 3. KNOW THE RULES

Most states do not allow child dedications or baptisms of children in foster care without clear permissions. They may not allow any such ceremonies while a child is still in state custody. As dedications are being discussed, check with your state laws to determine the best timing for a family in the adoption process to participate in child dedications.

## 4. THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE

As we prepare to dedicate children, we must be sensitive to the unique situations from which they come. As children who are no longer being raised by their biological parents, there may be questions or difficult thoughts about their families of origin. Be cautious of the language you choose to use today, considering what they will hear in the future. We do not vilify birth parents or the choices that led to a child's need for adoption. If a child listens back to your presentation 10 years from now, what will they think of the words you shared?

## 5. CONSIDER THE AUDIENCE

Your church is filled with people from all different backgrounds and ways of life. Not only are there foster and adoptive families in your church, but there may be families whose children are in foster care or were adopted at birth. As you talk about child dedications, consider this: if a birth mom or dad is in the room, will my words be harmful or healing?

## 6. GIVE A GIFT

Child dedications are often accompanied by a gift. You can give an engraved Bible or recruit someone to make a special gift for the child, such as a blanket. This gift can be kept in remembrance of the occasion. When considering gifts, take into account the child's age and be sure the gift is appropriate for him or her.

## 7. CHECK BEFORE SHARING

Although many people in your church may be fully aware of a family's choice to adopt, be sure to confirm which parts of the story, if any, the parents and children are comfortable sharing from the platform or online. It is also good practice to receive consent from the adoptive family to post any pictures online. Every adoption journey has its own nuances. You can serve your adoptive families well by clarifying what they feel comfortable sharing.

## 8. PARTNER IN PRAYER

Develop a team that serves your foster and adoptive families by praying for their specific needs on a regular basis. When the time comes for child dedications, invite Prayer Team members to join the family in the dedication prayer.

## 9. COMMIT TO LONG TERM

We know that all child dedications are a commitment on the part of the church. Raising Godly children is not an easy journey, but adoption is an especially difficult one. Commit to walking alongside families through the ups and downs of raising children affected by trauma. Learn all you can, give all you can, pray all you can, and resource all you can. Adoptive families need you more than you know.

## 10. CELEBRATE ALL FAMILIES

Families come in all shapes and sizes. Some grow with births, some are blended through marriage, and others are assembled by adoption. Some are big and some are small. Some are lead by single parent superheroes and others have both mom and dad. When families are celebrated at your church, remember to celebrate all families that God ordains.

