

Parent/Child Dedication Question and Answer

Why does WestGate Church do parent/child dedications?

Becoming a parent is a big deal. It's often one of the most life-defining monumental moments in someone's life. As with other milestones, it allows us time to pause and reflect. It's also an important time to mark and remember.

Nearly all parents experience a newfound sense of responsibility as the reality sinks in that we're responsible for another life that's both precious and delicate. And as deep feelings of joy and gratitude flow, so does the sense that this task of being a parent is so important and so complex that we need help. As Christians, we know that the help we need comes from God – not only from the Holy Spirit, but also in embodied ways from God's church and God's people.

Parent/Child dedication acknowledges a number of truths found in the Bible, including that:

1. Children are a gift from God Himself (Isaiah 24:44, Psalm 139:1-4, Psalm 127:3-5)
2. Some of the primary goals of parenting are to help children understand who God is (Psalm 32), to help them love God with everything they are (Deuteronomy 6:5-7) and to learn and follow the ways of God (Ephesians 6:1-4, Genesis 18:17-19)
3. Parents cannot instill values that they don't embody, so the way to be a Christ-centered parent is to constantly journey toward a Christ-centered life (Ephesians 5:1-2, 8-10, Luke 6:40)
4. Parenting is about love and love always involves risk. In parenting (and in life) we often cannot control outcomes. But we can commit ourselves to being faithful before God to model what it means to follow Jesus (Hebrews 13:7, Romans 12:2, Titus 2:7-8). This is one thing we can control.
5. God promises to help those who seek Him (Proverbs 8:17, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:7-8). He promises to give us wisdom (James 1:5, John 10:10). And God has formed a local family of believers to support each other through all the changing experiences of life (1 Thessalonian 5:11, Ephesians 2:19-22).

Therefore, parent/child dedication is a solemn and weighty statement by a parent or legal guardian of a child who feels both the joy and weight of this sacred task who has decided to humbly ask God for help both for wisdom on not only how to parent, but also in modeling what it means to love and follow God. It's a recognition that we need the help of God and His people to help us in this important responsibility and that God has promised to help us.

Is this different from water baptism?

Yes.

Water baptism, as we understand it at WestGate Church, is a public profession by someone who has made a deeply personal decision to follow Jesus. Baptism is an outward declaration and sign of the inward transformation and commitment to live for Jesus (Matthew 28:19). The baptism demonstrates death to self and new life with and in Jesus.

Therefore, this can only be done by someone old enough to understand the stakes of what they are professing. Obviously infants and very young children are unable to do this.

How old should a child be to be dedicated?

Parent/Child dedication is usually designed for young children, typically 5 and under.

Sometimes, there are cases when older children are dedicated. For example:

- 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.

We'd be happy to talk with you about the specifics of your situation, whatever it might be.

Do I need to be a member of WestGate Church?

We ask that you are either already a member of our church family or at least in the process of going through Discover Discipleship, which is our pathway toward becoming a member.

Here's why. The nature of the parent/child dedication is actually a pledge by parents to be faithful models of what it means to love and follow God. We believe that the Christian life is not only difficult to live alone (in isolation), it's actually impossible. We need each other (1 Cor. 12) like parts of the human body need each other.

As such, we think it's unwise for parents who desire to be faithful partners with God to not have a spiritual family to support them and their children through the changing seasons of life. We believe that being a part of a local church family is like being a part of a biological family: it's a formative place to both receive and give love, to serve and be served and to spiritually grow.

We also think it's wise to know what a church believes and how it operates before committing to it. As such:

- We ask the parent or parents participating in the dedication to have made a decision to follow Jesus Christ
- We ask the parent or parents participating in the dedication to learn more about the vision and values of our church by attending [Discover WestGate](#)
- We ask the parent or parents participating in the dedication to begin the process of [Discover Discipleship](#) if they haven't, and if they feel a sense of alignment with the values and vision of WestGate Church, to become members of our church family.

- We ask parents who are unmarried and living together to take steps to acknowledge and embrace God's design for sexual intimacy (which, according to our best understanding of Scripture, is reserved for one man and one woman within the covenantal relationship of marriage) before participating in a parent-child dedication service.
- We ask parents who are in a same-sex marriage to set up a meeting with us, so that we can discuss WestGate's theological position on marriage, as presented in our [paper](#) on sexuality and gender, for the sake of clarity
- We are open to having conversations with you on any of the above statements in person if you have any questions

I am a single parent. Can I dedicate my child?

Absolutely. Parent/Child dedications indicate the desire of a parent to ask God for being both a parent and a faithful model of what it means to love and follow Jesus.

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.

The decision to dedicate a child is not dependent upon the beliefs of the other parent. That being said, we do encourage single parents to discuss parent/child dedication with the child's other parent.

As a church, WestGate Church is committed to supporting single parents in providing a Christian foundation for their child's upbringing. As such, if you are a single parent who wants to participate in parent/child dedication and have any hesitation, confusion, or reservations, please reach out to us and we'd love to meet with you, hear more of your story, and better come alongside you.

What can I expect at the actual dedication?

The parent/child dedication will happen during our Sunday weekend services, whichever service works best for you.

- We will call the families participating up onto the stage
- We will show a slideshow of pictures of each of the children being dedicated (these pictures are provided by the families beforehand)
- We will have each family briefly introduce themselves and their child (or children)
- Our staff and elders will join the families on the stage while a pastor prays a brief prayer of blessing over the children and over the parents
- The families are then dismissed

Who can stand up front during the dedication?

For the sake of space, we ask that only the parents and siblings stand up front, but we encourage you to bring family and close friends with you to share this moment with you. If you're a single parent, you can ask a close friend or family member to stand with you, if you choose.