The Word of Life Community Church has provided this paper to teach you what the Word of God says concerning a “baby dedication”, also known as a “child dedication” or a “parent dedication”.

**WHAT IS A “BABY DEDICATION”?**

A “baby dedication” is a ceremony where Christian parents, and sometimes entire families, publicly thank God for the gift of a precious child; in doing so, parents dedicate their child to God in recognition that their child was ultimately born to glorify Him.

**IS A “BABY DEDICATION” BIBLICAL?**

There are several instances in the Word of God where people have dedicated their child to God. One instance is found in the Book of 1 Samuel. Hanna, who was a barren wife for many years, made a vow to God to dedicate her child to Him all the days of his life, if God would answer her prayer by giving her a son (1 Samuel 1:11). God graciously answered Hanna’s prayer and provided her a son named Samuel (meaning “God heard”). Hanna, in return, dedicated Samuel to God as she had promised. This is indicated in 1 Samuel 1:26-28, which says:

“*She (Hanna) said, ‘Oh, my lord (Eli, the priest)! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the LORD. 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.’ And he worshiped the LORD there.*”

The above instance was a special instance where Hanna willingly dedicated Samuel to God to fulfill her promise.

The Book of Luke provides another instance. When Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple of Jerusalem in order to present Him before God (Luke 2:22). They did this to fulfill the Old Testament Law that God had given the nation of Israel through Moses. This Old Testament Law was required to remind the nation of Israel that God delivered every firstborn son of those families - who, by faith, partook in the Passover - from the tenth plague that God brought upon Egypt; the tenth plague involving the death of families’ firstborn son and animal. Having delivered the firstborn sons of those faithful families, God declared that the firstborn son of future generations belonged to Him (Exodus 13:2, 12, 15).

The above instance relates to the nation of Israel, who was required to obey the Old Testament Law. With regards to the Church today, however, there are no Scripture verses to support Christian parents dedicating their child to God, particularly their firstborn son. Christian parents, therefore, are not required to dedicate their child to God according to Scripture.

The New Testament, however, is full of Scripture verses to give thanks to God for the blessings He has given us. The blessing of a child definitely falls under this category. Therefore, if Christian parents would like to dedicate their child to God, after prayerful consideration and with the Holy Spirit’s leading, then they should do so.

**WHAT IS THE PARENTS’ RESPONSIBILITIES?**

Christian parents, by way of a “baby dedication”, make a vow before God and others to raise their child to the best of their ability according to the Word of God. In doing so, they promise
to: (1) teach their child the Word of God; (2) show their child how to live a godly life by way of example; (3) love their child with all their heart; (4) provide for their child’s needs; and (5) pray with, and for, their child.

Even though every child must personally put trusting faith in Jesus Christ as one’s personal Savior in order to spend eternity with God, the child’s parents should do their best to help their child make such an important decision. Christian parents help their child make such a decision by consistently performing the responsibilities identified above. To be successful in performing these Godly responsibilities consistently, parents must first love God themselves and have their own personal relationship with Him.

**WHAT IS THE LOCAL ASSEMBLY’S RESPONSIBILITIES?**

The local assembly is comprised of brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ who have the responsibility to love each other (1 Thessalonians 4:9); this love includes helping parents teach their children the ways of the Lord. This also includes praying for the parents and the children, as well as being Godly examples for the children to follow. This is accomplished when each person in the local assembly uses their spiritual gift(s) as the Holy Spirit leads, and by having various programs at a local assembly like Sunday school, etc.

**WHAT ABOUT GODPARENTS?**

The Word of God is silent with regards to children having godparents. Hence, it is decision of the Christian parents whether or not they want to choose godparents for their child. Godparents are traditionally chosen by parents to assist them in their child’s upbringing and personal development. It is important that if godparents are chosen, they are Christians who live a spiritual life before God so that they may teach the child the ways of the Lord.

**IS A “BABY DEDICATION” THE SAME AS “INFANT WATER BAPTISM”?**

A “baby dedication” is NOT the same as “infant water baptism”. The purpose of “water baptism” is to symbolize the truth that it is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ that brings salvation to one who has believed in Jesus Christ (Romans 6:4).

Although, many people partake in “infant water baptism”, they do not partake in “water baptism” from a Biblical viewpoint. Jesus Christ commands a person to partake in “water baptism” AFTER he or she becomes a Christian. A newborn infant is not capable of putting trusting faith in Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior, and therefore is not presently a Christian. (For more on the subject of baptism, please read the “BAPTISM” pamphlet.)

A “baby dedication” is different than a “water baptism”. A “baby dedication” is a public dedication of a child to God as an expression of thanks, recognizing that the child ultimately belongs to Him.

**WHEN SHOULD A BABY BE DEDICATED?**

Christian parents should dedicate their child, if and when the Holy Spirit leads them to do so after prayerful consideration. This can occur at any age of a child’s life; therefore, any age of childhood is acceptable for parents to dedicate their child to God. Typically, this decision occurs when the child is young – thus the name “baby dedication”.

Please contact the church at (508) 644-1418 if you would like to discuss this topic further.