



Starting Line

The journey down the path of raising a lifetime follower of Christ starts with a parent's commitment to fulfilling their God-given responsibility.

Deuteronomy 6:4 - *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 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 are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children."*

Part One: Baby Blessing and Parent Dedication (Birth - 2 Years) *Make a commitment to raise your child in a Christ-centered home.*

Congratulations on the arrival and blessing of your new baby! As a church family, we are excited to partner with you as you begin this incredible journey with your child. We know that you are going to be great parents, and, as parents, you are the most important influence in your child's life.

First, take a commitment to model, teach, and show the Christian faith to your child, even now as a newborn!

We encourage you to begin with praying a prayer of blessing over your child each night, as you lay them down (or anytime you are with them - morning, noon, or night). Get into the habit of simply praying a prayer like the one in Numbers 6:24-26...

"May the LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace."

The incredible journey of raising a lifetime follower of Christ begins now - and it begins with you!

God bless you, as parents, and God bless your new child!

What is Parent Dedication and Baby Blessing?

At the beginning of each year, the elders of our congregation conduct a Parent Dedication and Baby Blessing Sunday. On this day, all parents who have had a new baby in the previous year are recognized. The elders introduce each family to the congregation and give their blessing over each new child and their parents. The blessing mentions the parents' role in being the spiritual leader of children, and our church's commitment to supporting parents in that responsibility. That Sunday also features a special class, which further explains to parents their role in the commitment. Our prayer is that you will commit to model, teach, and live the Christian faith.

Here are some ideas for making this Parent Dedication and Baby Blessing a special time for you and your family:

- Invite extended family members over for a celebration meal.
- Ask family members and friends to write notes, blessing their children and their commitment in helping them to become lifetime followers of Christ.
- Make a video of your initial hopes, dreams, and prayers for your child and their future relationship with Jesus, as well as your commitment to leading them down this path.

When to Commit to Your Responsibility...

Don't wait until the Parent Dedication Sunday to make your commitment. We suggest that you, as parents, make your commitment even as early as your pregnancy. Our hope is for you to be prepared for the spiritual responsibility you have and to commit to personally growing in faith and service to God. Then, once your baby is born, begin by praying over your child daily, as well as praying for the growth of your personal faith.

Next Steps in Your Faith @ Home Journey...

- Pray daily for your child.
- Consistently spend time in God's Word.
- Be active in the church and its ministries.
- Actively serve God and others.

Recommended Reading...

Impress Faith on Your Kids (by Mark Holmen)
It Starts at Home (by Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope)
Faith Begins at Home (by Mark Holmen)

Part Two: For Parents with Children Beyond 2 Years of Age

Make a commitment to raise your child in a Christ-centered home.

No matter the age of your children or their stage of development, it is always a good time to make an initial commitment or to renew your commitment to your spiritual role as parents.

One of the first steps in this process is for you to acknowledge and accept your role in raising a life-long follower of Christ. That commitment will include intentionally making your home a place where faith is taught, nurtured, modeled, and grown.

Don't fret about lost time or milestones missed, if your children are older. Start with the milestone that is age-appropriate to get ideas for getting Christ-like living in the center of your life and home. Don't feel that you have to do everything at once. Begin with one small shift - start with one little discipline. For example, begin sharing a meal together around the table, sharing thoughts about the day, and praying together. At bedtime, read a little from the Bible together and talk openly about any topic of interest.

What You Can Do As a Parent...

Commit to personally growing in faith and in service to God. Commit to improving one spiritual discipline - prayer, Bible reading, service, worship, etc. Reevaluate your priorities.

Here are a few items to keep in mind as you begin this journey:

- The most important influence in a child's life is their mother and father.
- Nothing is more important than your child's personal relationship with Jesus.
- No one has more potential to influence a child's faith than a parent.
- No one has more potential to influence a parent's faith than the church.

This is your starting line!

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- Consistently spend time in God's Word.
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- Actively serve God and others.

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