

## Baby Dedication at Open Table Church

At Open Table Church we dedicate babies instead of baptizing them. For questions regarding baby dedication instead of infant baptism, please see the next section.

### Baby Dedication

#### 1. What is baby dedication?

- a. It is:
  - i. A memorial, a marker
  - ii. A public declaration, vow
  - iii. A means of blessing the child and setting them apart (dedicating/consecrating them) to the Lord
  - iv. A means of blessing, encouraging and commissioning parents
  - v. An opportunity to call the church community to fulfill its role in creating a safe and loving environment where children will come to know Jesus.
  - vi. Cf. Ps 127:3, Prov 22:6, Deut 6:5-7, 1 Sam 1:27-18, Mark 10:13-16, Luke 2:22
- b. It is not an ordinance—i.e. a ritual commanded by Jesus. Baptism and the Lord's Supper (communion) are the only new covenant ordinances in Scripture.

#### 2. Baby dedication ceremony outline:

- a. Help parents and the church recognize that children belong first and foremost to God:  
*The all-powerful God who created everything loves kids. Col 1:15-17 tells us that everything was created by Jesus and for Jesus. Every child was created by Jesus and for Jesus...so we come alongside these parents this morning as they dedicate, as they set apart their children to the Lord...as they say Lord, this child is yours and we want them to choose to live for you.*
- b. Call parents to recognize their responsibility to raise their children in the ways of the Lord:  
*Parents, do you commit to raise these children in the ways of the Lord Jesus, to love them well and to teach them in word and actions what it means to follow God? we do*
- c. Call church community to recognize their responsibility toward other members:  
*Church community, body of Christ, sisters and brothers will you do your part to make this a holy and loving community where these children will experience God's love and learn to know and to love Christ. we will*
- d. Bless the child and parents as a community through prayer:  
*parents name:*  
*child's name*  
*read verse*  
*Pray: Lord we ask you to...And we bless you \_\_\_\_\_ in the name of the F, S, HS Lord, empower these parents with your Spirit to parent well. Help them remember to turn to you for strength and wisdom. Fill them HS with your love, bless their lives and their homes with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. Amen.*

## Why does Open Table Church practice baby dedication instead of infant baptism?

#### 1. Key arguments supporting **infant baptism**:

- a. Scripture: New Testament examples of household baptism where belief is not specified: Acts 16:14-15; 1 Cor 1:16. Problem: We don't know the age of people in these households.
- b. Extra-biblical:

- i. Irenaeus (c. AD 130–202) speaks of children and infants being "born again to God".
    - ii. Origen (AD 185–c. 254) mentions infant baptism as traditional and customary.
    - iii. Tertullian (AD c. 155–230) advised postponement of baptism until after marriage, but mentions that it was customary to baptize infants with sponsors speaking on their behalf.
    - iv. The Apostolic Tradition, attributed to Hippolytus of Rome (AD ?-235) describes the ceremony of baptism and states that children were baptized first, and if any of them could not answer for themselves their parents or someone else from their family was to answer for them (cf. godparents).
  - c. Denominational views:
    - i. Lutherans: The creation of faith is exclusively God's work, so it does not depend on the actions of the one baptized, whether infant or adult.
    - ii. Methodists: Infant baptism illustrates prevenient grace
    - iii. Presbyterian and Reformed (Covenantal Theology): Infant baptism has replaced Old Testament circumcision and is the ceremony of initiation into the Christian covenant community. A profession of true faith is still required for salvation.
    - iv. Roman Catholics (Sacraments): Infant baptism is a sacramental ritual that itself conveys grace. Problem: the sacramental view of grace is has very little biblical support.
    - v. Major denominations that practice infant baptism:
 

1. Anglican (Episcopal, Church of England)	5. many Reformed Churches
2. Lutherans	6. some Church of the Nazarene
3. Presbyterians	7. United Church of Christ
4. Methodists	8. Roman Catholic Church
	9. Eastern Orthodox
  - d. Confirmation:
    - i. Roman Catholics: Confirmation is a sacrament that strengthens the grace of the baptized.
    - ii. Lutherans: Confirmation publically confirms the baptismal vows that were taken on the person's behalf when they were an infant.
  - e. Historical: During the medieval and Reformation eras, when church-state were one, infant baptism was seen as a way to incorporate children into the church and the state.
- 2. Key arguments for **believer baptism**:
  - a. Scripture:
    - i. The New Testament should be our norm and it clearly states that people believe, repent, and then are baptized. This is not possible for an infant. **Acts 2:38** Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
    - ii. Belief is noted in this household baptism example: **Acts 18:8** Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.
  - b. Extra-biblical: The Didache (c. AD 100) contains the earliest extra-biblical directions for baptism and adult baptism is implied because the baptized person was required to fast.
  - c. Baptism is not equivalent to circumcision:
    - i. Baptism is a sign and seal of new birth (born again); circumcision was a sign and seal of physical birth.
    - ii. John the Baptist baptized people who were also required to be circumcised.

- d. Infants do not have faith which is required for salvation:
  - i. **Romans 10:17** So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.
  - ii. **Hebrews 11:6** And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
- e. The Lord's Supper and Baptism are both commanded by Jesus. The Lord's Supper should not be given to unbelievers (1 Cor 11:26-28), nor should baptism.
- f. Practical: Believer baptism by immersion provides a vivid, experiential reminder of a person's choice, commitment, and new identity. As with a marriage ceremony, the memory of a public commitment can inspire endurance when times get tough. Open Table Church encourages infant-baptized and non-baptized believers to be publicly baptized when they come to a conscious commitment to faith (see precedent of re-baptizing Acts 19:1-5).
- g. Major denominations that practice believer baptism:
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Baptists</li> <li>ii. most Non-Denominational Churches</li> <li>iii. most Pentecostals</li> <li>iv. Apostolic Christians</li> <li>v. Disciples of Christ</li> <li>vi. Mennonites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vii. Community of Christ</li> <li>viii. Plymouth Brethren</li> <li>ix. Seventh-day Adventists</li> <li>x. Christian &amp; Missionary Alliance Churches</li> </ul>
---	--

**Open Table Church** practices baby dedication (and believer baptism) instead of infant baptism while respecting those who disagree. It is not an essential difference with regards to salvation; it is a difference that distinguishes denominations (for more on that see: Essentials vs. Non-Essentials).

Please let us know if you have any questions, and we're happy to help you process these decisions.

If you're ready to dedicate your child, please contact us to find out the next baby dedication date.

Open Table Church  
[info@opentablechurch.org](mailto:info@opentablechurch.org)  
 925 298-2358