

INTRODUCTION

Children are a gift from the Lord and are to be cherished, loved and celebrated. Occasionally, at One Harbor, we set aside time on a Sunday morning to celebrate the new babies that God has added to our number. Below is a brief summary of why we have Baby Celebrations and what they are designed to do.

WHY HAVE BABY CELEBRATIONS?

There is nothing in the Bible commanding us to have Baby Celebrations. Therefore, we do not require parents to participate in them. However, we think there is much to be said for parents standing before the church to thank God for their children, to ask for God's help in parenting, and to ask for the church's help as well. So we encourage parents who love Jesus and who want to see their children grow up to love Jesus to stand up in front of the church and celebrate their baby.

WHAT EXACTLY ARE BABY CELEBRATIONS?

Let's start by explaining what Baby Celebrations are *not*. They are not commitment ceremonies, christenings, or other actions that do anything *to* the baby. (This is one of the reasons we no longer call them Baby Dedications.) We believe that, ultimately, God is the one who saves and there is nothing we can do, during a Sunday Morning celebration or at any other moment in life, that will change a person's heart. A child is no different after a Baby Celebration than before. As one pastor recently wrote, "Theologically, to dedicate something or someone is to set apart something as holy to the Lord. To dedicate a baby, then, is to act as if the baby is already holy." This is precisely why we do not baptize babies, but only confessing, repenting adults. If we do not baptize babies, we should not dedicate them, christen them or do anything else which suggests we are doing something to our baby which is changing him or her.

So what are we doing during a Baby Celebration? Three things:

First, the parents are standing before the church to thank God for the gift of a baby. This is especially significant in a culture that has devalued human life and taken children for granted as inconveniences. As Christians, we believe that following Jesus is often inconvenient, but is always worth it. And so, though our children require our time, energy and resources, they are first and foremost gifts to thank God for.

Second, the parents are publicly committing to raise their children in accordance to the Gospel and are asking God to help them in their efforts. Parenting is a stewardship issue, because Christians believe that our children actually belong to the Lord and He has simply entrusted them to us for a time. Therefore, we need his help to parent our children and raise them in accordance with His wishes, so that when the season of our stewardship is over, we will have given them

every resource and opportunity to understand the Gospel and what it means to live in response to it.

Third, the church is committing to help the parents by coming along side them, encouraging them, and helping to instruct and train their children. Parents are meant to be the primary disciple-makers for their children. Therefore, the church is not supposed to replace parents, but is meant to complement and reinforce the Gospel-centered training and instruction that parents provide.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN BABY CELEBRATIONS?

Any Christian parent can participate in Baby Celebrations. A parent does not have to be a partner of the church, but by participating is acknowledging the role and influence of the church on their child's life while they are a part of our community.

Parents who have not yet decided to become Christians should not participate in Baby Celebrations, since the entire premise is that parents are promising to raise their children according to the Gospel of Jesus. It is essential that parents believe that Gospel for themselves before they promise to teach it to their children.

If you would like to sign up for baby dedications, please email info@oneharborchurch.com