



Baby Baptism and Dedication Class



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Oviedo City Church

We understand that parenting is a big responsibility, and children don't come with an instruction manual! As your church, we want to come alongside you and encourage you right from the start. We want to partner with you in becoming disciples who make disciples, beginning with your kids. Our goal is to provide a safe community where you can be honest about your needs and struggles. You are not in this alone. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve you, pray for you, and go on this journey with you!

As you consider baptizing or dedicating your child, begin by reading through this packet and attending the Infant Baptism and Dedication class. Once both have been completed, take the following steps:

- 1) Prayerfully decide whether you would like to baptize or dedicate your child.
- 2) Confirm your participation in the next Infant Baptism/Dedication Service by completing the form that will be emailed to you after attending the class.
- 3) Pray through the questions you will be asked at the service. Even before that great day, we invite you to pray with your spouse, and in your own words, give your child to God!
- 4) Celebrate the baptism or dedication of your child at the service!



Baptism and Dedication: A Primer for Parents

The Church Landscape Today

A generation or so ago, the majority of Americans were members of a local church. Most stayed with the denomination in which they were raised. If your parents raised you Roman Catholic, chances are, you remained one as an adult. If your parents were Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, or any of the other various denominations, the same held true. When people moved to a new town and joined a new church, they often sought out the same, familiar “tribe.” Nondenominational churches were few and far between.

Over the last 40 years, much has changed. More and more people have dropped out of the church of their upbringing and explored the alternatives, including the rising number of nondenominational and interdenominational churches. Now, when people move and look for a new church, their preferences surrounding church programs and worship styles often prove more important than denominational loyalty. As a result of this movement, many people are attending churches with traditions and theological positions that differ from what they are used to. In no area is this more obvious than in the various approaches to baptism. In any given church (and Oviedo City Church is no exception), you will find much variety.

Generally speaking, there are two positions relating to baptism and children. Some people hold to **credobaptism**, a position in which only people who can make a confession of faith are baptized. Credobaptists typically dedicate infants and young children rather than baptizing them. **Paedobaptists**, on the other hand, baptize the infant children of a believing parent. Among paedobaptists, there is wide disagreement about what is taking place. Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and some Anglicans see it as a washing away of sin and entrance into saving faith. Presbyterians see infant baptism as a ceremony that acknowledges the child as a member of the covenant family. According to this view, baptism dedicates the child to the Lord much like circumcision did in the Old Testament, with the hope that he or she will one day confess faith in Christ.

Our Position

At Oviedo City Church, we recognize that the debate over baptism is nuanced and complex. There’s a reason why the debate has been going on since the early days of the sixteenth century! We also recognize that while baptism and dedication are important points of discussion and belief, they need not be something that divides a church or its people. At OCC, we seek to hold to the unity of the church. We are a



gospel-focused ministry that remains united on key issues. In areas of debate within the church, we seek to stay in conversation and show grace to one another.

For these reasons, we—along with a growing list of churches across the country—practice infant dedication and infant baptism equally. We can practice both because they are not essential matters of faith. One can be a follower of Jesus and sincerely hold to infant dedication as a biblical practice; likewise, one can be a follower of Jesus and sincerely hold to infant baptism as a biblical practice. The fact that scholars continue to debate which position is correct while remaining in fellowship with one another should tell us that we need not make either an essential doctrine or practice.

What we do agree on is that if one is claiming to be a follower of Jesus, then at some point, baptism should take place. Jesus commanded us to be baptized as part of following him. He did not give us clear details on the who and how of baptism (though some people believe he did), and the ongoing debate shows us that this issue is not as clear as we might think or hope. **This paper is designed to help parents understand the options and make the decision that most closely aligns with their interpretation of Scripture.**

The Desire to Set Our Children Apart

The common ground on both sides of the discussion is the desire for children to grow up knowing and trusting in Christ and to one day make a personal statement of faith in Jesus. Both infant dedication and infant baptism are ceremonies that take place with the intent of putting a stake in the ground, saying that *these children will be raised to love Jesus and to recognize their need to love and trust him for salvation*. It is a way of setting our children before the Lord, making promises as parents and as a church that we will mentor and disciple them to that end.

As a church, we partner with parents as they serve as the primary disciple-makers in their children's lives, equipping them with gospel truth and training. It is our sincerest desire that *all* children, dedicated or baptized, will one day confess Christ as Lord.

Knowing that we all have the same goal, but perhaps see differing ways of achieving it, should inform us as to the necessity of being gracious to one another and working together so that all of our children will come to know and love Jesus.



Our Understanding of Infant Baptism

When it comes to baptism at OCC, several points need to be kept in mind. We are of the belief that when infants are baptized, it is done as a continuation of the Old Covenant practice of circumcision, which set apart the male children of Israel as children of the covenant. This meant that they would be raised in the faith, taught the truths of Scripture, and expected to one day own the faith for themselves, declaring this at their Bar Mitzvah. Baptism is not a sign of the washing away of a person's sin or that they are saved, any more than it is for people who make a statement of faith in Christ and are then baptized. **It is a sign of the covenant agreement between a person and God.** In the case of infants being baptized, it is the believing parent who is making the promise to raise the child as a member of the covenant family. As we place this sign upon them, we are trusting God for the day when they will embrace the covenant promises of baptism by trusting Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Our Understanding of Dedication

Parents who decide to dedicate their children are saying the same thing as parents who baptize their children. They are promising to raise their children in the faith, teaching them Christianity and leading them to one day confess Christ as Lord. While a baptism doesn't take place at the time, **dedication is still a ceremony of promises being made to God.** Together, parents and the church commit to mentoring and discipling these children as a part of the covenant family, believing that one day they will put their trust in Jesus. When they do, the expectation is that they will be baptized as believers who confess their own faith in Christ.

How We Do Both

At OCC, we honor both positions. In practical terms, that means we do believer baptisms for those who confess faith in Christ. We do infant baptisms for believing parents who want to dedicate their children to the Lord with baptism as the sign of that covenant agreement. We do infant dedications for parents who want to dedicate their children to the Lord and dedicate themselves to raising them in the faith. We do all of these as a church body because the church plays a part in all of these commitments before the Lord. The church's promise is to partner with all parents, teaching their children who Jesus is and treating them as members of the covenant family.



Frequently Asked Questions

If a person was baptized as an infant, can they be baptized as a believer when they are older?

While some denominations and churches would say no, OCC recognizes that this public statement of faith in Christ can be very meaningful for people who were already baptized as infants. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that a person does not get baptized every time they have a renewed sense of commitment to Christ, or out of fear that their infant baptism was somehow insufficient.

Is there a “right way” to baptize someone?

Throughout history, churches have used many methods of baptism, including full immersion, sprinkling, and pouring. While full immersion is symbolically powerful, it is not required. What is important is not the amount of water or how it is applied, but that the water is representative of God making a covenant with his people.

Who is permitted to stand on the platform during the baptism or dedication?

Participation on the platform is limited to the child and his or her parent(s) or guardian(s). While we recognize the role of godparents in some traditions, this is not a component of baptism or dedication at OCC. Rather, we see the entire church as committing to help with the spiritual nurture of the child. We encourage you to invite loved ones to join the congregation in celebrating and affirming this significant moment in your child’s life.

Do I need to be a member of OCC to have my child baptized or dedicated?

Yes. Child dedication and baptism reflect the partnership and mutual commitment between parents and the church to raise children in the Lord. We encourage you to consider making OCC your church home first in order to foster this partnership.

Can I participate if I am a single parent or if my spouse is not a believer?

Yes. We acknowledge that it takes extra effort for a single believing parent to faithfully raise their child in the Lord, and we are committed to supporting our single parents in this way. If the unbelieving parent is still involved in the child’s life, we encourage you to discuss the dedication or baptism of your child with them and solicit their support even though it is not appropriate for them to participate.

Is there an age limit for dedicating or baptizing my child?

Yes. We recommend that only children under three years old participate in this type of service. Since child dedication and baptism involves the faithful obedience of parents, it is best applied to infants and young children who cannot yet make or communicate a



personal faith decision. If your child is beginning to ask questions about Jesus, we would love to help you lead your child to faith in him!

Where can I find out more about baptism?

There is a longer position paper at OCC that goes into detail on the biblical, theological, and historical background of baptism. To access a copy, email info@oviedocity.church. We also recommend the following book for more information: *Baptism: Three Views* by David F. Wright, published by IVP Academic.



Questions for Infant Baptism & Dedication:

To the parent(s):

- Do you claim God's covenant promises and benefits for your child and, by faith, do you look to the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of your child as you do your own? If so, say: "We do."
- Do you now unreservedly dedicate your child to God, and do you promise by relying on God's power and grace through the Holy Spirit to live an exemplary life before your child? If so, say: "We do."
- Do you commit yourself to pray with and for your child, to teach them the Scriptures, and to faithfully include them in the life of the church of Jesus Christ? If so, say: "We do."

To the congregation:

- Do you, the members of this congregation, acting for yourselves and on behalf of the whole body of Christ, assume responsibility with these parents for the spiritual nurture of this child? If so, say: "We do."





Our Mission at OCC Kids

We believe that children can *know* God intimately, *grow* in their faith, and *go* into the world to make a difference in the lives of others.

To accomplish this, OCC Kids Ministry is centered on teaching children biblical truths through Bible stories, interactive activities, and special events. We know that parents and guardians are children's first and best teachers, so it's a priority that we equip you with suggestions and tools to help you on this journey. For more information, visit the "OCC Families" page on our website at www.oviedocity.church/kids.

