



FAMILY DEDICATION PARENTS

GOAL OF FAMILY DEDICATION

Hello, and welcome. If you're reading this, you're likely either a parent or you know a parent, and he/she has invited you to be an influencer in his/her child's life. At Traders Point, we think Kids Ministry should be more than just a weekend experience—we want to come alongside parents to help them raise their kids to love Jesus and follow him. We believe parents have the most important spiritual role in their children's lives.

Every child needs at least five healthy adults in his or her life to thrive and develop strong relationships with others and with God. That's why on a weekly basis, we have over 750 adults across all of our campuses who share the responsibility as Kids Ministry volunteers with parents. If you're a parent, think of at least three adults you can ask to step in and intentionally influence your child's life—a grandparent, aunt or uncle, or a trusted friend. Other adults who model what it's like to know God and be loved by him only add to what children experience at home. Establishing these relationships early will prove vital in adolescence when, believe it or not, your children might not want to lean on a parent for emotional and spiritual support.

Our prayer for this *Family Dedication Guide* is that it would prepare parents for a lifetime of raising their children to know Jesus and follow Him. Our hope as a church is to create healthy communities where kids can see this modeled for them at home, in their community, and in their church.

You could also choose to put together a family dedication in your own home, which we'll explain at the end of this material. Take some time to walk through this content. There are some natural places for you (and your spouse, if applicable) to reflect and think through this together. This is the most important part; don't skip ahead to the party. What you decide as a parent can impact your child's life for eternity.

Let's get started.



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PARTNERING IN YOUR HOME

Big idea: To help your child love Jesus, you have to love Jesus.

As a parent, the way you live out your faith has the biggest impact in your child's life. Don't let this scare you, though. The first and most important part of living out your faith is teaching your kids the gospel and modeling what it looks like to be a forgiven sinner in need of God's grace.

Many well-intentioned parents mistakenly buy into the idea that the church has the biggest spiritual impact in their children's lives. While the church should play a major role in your child's faith, what children experience at home will either amplify or take away from what they learn at church. The spiritual environment of the home and the church have to work in tandem to have the biggest impact on a child's life.

We could spend a lot of time talking about different parenting tactics and strategies, but there's really one thing that matters most as you parent and raise your kids; **to help your kids know and love Jesus, they have to see you know and love Jesus.** You don't have to be perfect, but your kids need to see your need for God and his grace. That can only happen when you parent from a place of humility and trust in Jesus.

Foundation of Parenting

In Deuteronomy 6:5-9 (NLT), we read:

"And you must love the lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

In this passage, Moses is telling the Israelites the way God has given them to live. Notice his primary concern is with starting simply by loving God with all your heart. Just before this passage, Moses gives the Israelites the Ten Commandments, and again, we see a similar theme; love the Lord first, and let no one else take His place. If your faith relied only on the law and your parenting only on a list of rules and regulations, we wouldn't need Jesus. Our faith hinges on Jesus' sacrifice for us through his death and resurrection. Through the gospel, you are forever changed and free from the bondage of sin, not just as a child of God, but also as a parent. You model for your children what it's like to live a life of confession, repentance, and dependence on Jesus. Your job is to simply point to him.

Take a minute to reflect:

- What does Deuteronomy 6:5-9 look like in your home?
- As a parent, do you feel like you need to have all the right answers, or do you parent out of a posture of humility, knowing you need God's to help?



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Givers and Receivers of Grace

In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul writes, *"We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us."*

Not only is this good news for kids, but it's good news for you as a parent. You can use every opportunity to tell your kids about Jesus and what he's done. Even in frustrating times, you can have confidence that God gives you grace and he can use your mistakes to point to him.

Take time to reflect:

- When is a time you needed to give yourself grace or ask your kids for grace?

When you know you've sinned against your kids and against God, be sure to acknowledge it in front of them. They don't need you to be perfect; they need to see you practice the gospel. Apologize to your kids, own it, and ask for their forgiveness. This little step goes a long way in the memory of a child. As Paul David Tripp said in *Parenting*, "No one needs a parent who has graduated from grace."

Studying Your Kid

"A child's perception of closeness matters more than the parent's perception of closeness."

—Kara Powell, *Sticky Families*

It's important that we show how much we love Jesus, but it's also important to show how much we love our kids. Think through the following questions, and come up with a plan to get to know your child. Every kid is different and receives and gives love in different ways, and it's important for us to know our children in specific ways.

1. What is your child's love language? What does he or she love to do with you?
2. Does your child know you want to have a relationship with him or her no matter what you say or do?
3. What are ways you show your child how much you love him or her?
 - a. go on special dates
 - b. pack notes in his or her lunchbox
 - c. pray out loud over him or her, and be specific
 - d. talk about Jesus and God's love during everyday activities
 - e. take an interest in what he or she loves

For further reflection:

- What evidence would your child come up with to know you're a Christian?
- What two ways are you going to invest in your relationship with Jesus? How will these help you invest in the kids in your life?
- How are you currently living out Deuteronomy 6:5-9? What ways can you lean into what it says?
- Additional scripture to read:
 - a. Ephesians 6:1-4
 - b. Psalm 22: 30-31
- Have you picked out a verse for your family? If not, what could it be?



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PARTNERING IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Big Idea: To help your child love Jesus, they have to see others love Jesus outside their home.

As your child grows up, they will start to look to people outside of their parents for advice or as an example of how to live their lives. While it can be intimidating that you are no longer your child's primary confidante, this is a natural and normal part of growing up, maturing, and learning who God has called them to be. As parents, you continue to show the love of God to your kids, but they need adults they can trust as a safe place to ask questions.

It's crucial that these adults are following Christ and modeling his example for your child. These might even be the people going through *Family Dedication* with you right now! Let them pour into your child by spending time and building trust with them. Let your child ask them hard questions about God, relationships, school, etc.

In Ephesians 4:15-16, Paul writes:

"Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of His body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts to grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love."

The body of Christ works to make each piece better so everyone can succeed. The people who surround your child will have different strengths than you. Allow your kid to learn from their strengths. At the same time, allow them to see where they might be weak and how they lean into Christ to overcome their weaknesses. Let your child see adults using their gifts to break down barriers for others to meet Jesus. Though these interactions may seem simple, they can become the catalyst for your kid understanding what it means to live a life in love with Jesus.

Take time to reflect:

- Who was one adult that poured into you outside of your parents?

Identifying Your Child's Community

Like we said earlier, it is important that a child has five healthy adults in their life. Kara Powell in *Sticky Families* says these are not just five Bible study leaders, but five people to whom you "...outsource the spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual development of your children."

These adults should know your child's name, their hobbies, what they love, and what they dislike. They should be praying for your child and helping them learn what it means to live a life loving Jesus and following him. Your child should be excited to spend time with them. These are people your child should look up to and get encouragement from.



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So, you might be wondering: how do I find these people? Hopefully, they're already a part of your life. Think about who goes out of their way to care about your child. These could be grandparents, aunts/uncles, family friends, teachers, coaches, or adults in your group. If your child is old enough, ask them who they enjoy learning from, or who they think lives a life following Jesus.

After you identify five people you'd like to intentionally pour into your child, talk with them. Explain to them why you're asking them to get to know your kid. Give specific characteristics you admire in them and why you think they are an important part in helping your child live a life following Jesus.

Take time to reflect:

- Pray for the people God will bring into your child's life. Pray that God will give you wisdom to identify these people in every season of your child's life.
- Have you identified five adults to help them in their walk with Jesus?
- If so, what do these relationships look like?
- If not, who can you ask to become a part of your child's community?

Being Part of a Community

Once you have identified your child's community, it's time to start involving them in your kid's life. If you only can identify two or three people, that's okay! Invite them to birthday parties and graduations, give them sports schedules, and encourage them to ask your child how they can be praying for them. Be sure they follow up on those requests.

Most importantly, be sure your kid is seeing how much that person loves Jesus. As part of a kid's community, ask them to share their story with your child. Allow your kid to ask them tough questions about Jesus, God, and what it means to follow him. Let your child serve with them and see them love others the way Jesus calls us to. Sometimes, simply doing life together is the best way for a kid to see someone living their life out in a way that loves Jesus.

Take time to reflect:

- Who are the kids in your life, outside of your own, you can pour into?
- What are intentional ways you can help them grow and mature in faith?

For further reflection:

- Read Acts 2:44-47. What are the benefits of Christians doing life together? How can this impact your kids?
- What characteristics do you want to see in your child when they are 18? Who can you put in your child's life to help them foster those characteristics?



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PARTNERING IN YOUR CHURCH

Big Idea: The church should be your partner in teaching your child about Jesus.

Parents and the church get the opportunity to work together to help kids experience Jesus.

Reggie Joiner writes in *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity*:

"If [the home and the church] work together they can potentially make a greater impact than if they work alone. They need each other. Too much is at stake for either one to fail. Their primary task is to build God's Kingdom in the hearts of men and women, sons and daughters."

The church provides Biblical teaching during weekend services so kids can learn who Jesus is and that God loves them. Parents take that teaching and reinforce it during the week, continuing to guide their kids towards Jesus. When these two entities work together, eternities can be changed as kids begin to love Jesus and accept him as their Savior.

Experience Church on Weekends

Kids need to see that their parents never stop learning about Jesus. Make an effort to regularly attend weekend services. Give them an overview of the Bible lesson that day. Talk to your kid about what you learned from it. Play a song for them that impacted you during worship.

Then, ask your kids the same questions. What Bible lesson did they learn? What did this teach them about Jesus? What was a favorite song or activity they did with their friends? Talk about these questions regularly. Show your kids that church isn't something we just sit through, but something we interact with and learn from. When we learn about God and his son, Jesus, we grow in our faith and learn to love him and others more.

Take time to reflect:

- How do you perceive church? How does your child?
- Are you the same person at church that you are at home?
- What is your routine for talking about what you learned about church with your family? What routine can you establish?

Partnering inside the Church Walls

Attending church is important, but partnering with the church goes past the hour a week your family attends service. Applying what your child learns in Kids Ministry is just as important as attending. While helping your child apply what they are learning may sound intimidating, you don't need a Bible college degree or to be following Jesus for 10+ years to help your child experience Jesus at home.



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The first step is simple: read the Bible with your child. In the resources listed with this guide, we include a couple Bibles appropriate for children of various ages. Take time to read through the stories with your child. Pray together beforehand asking God to reveal himself to you and your child as you read together. Talk to your child about their favorite Bible stories and why they love them. Then, share your favorite stories too! Keep open communication about what God is teaching you through your time reading the Bible, and ask your child to tell you the same.

Let your child see you serving others. Jesus teaches his disciples in John 13:34-35, "So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

When we serve others, we show everyone, including our kids, how much we love Jesus. We show them that Jesus is our priority and time spent serving means more than a baseball game, favorite tv show, or even a family lunch. We adjust our schedules so that we make showing each other the love of Jesus our goal. Talk to your kids about the ways you serve and why you love it. Tell them what Jesus is teaching you through serving and why you feel called to serve in the role you do.

Take time to reflect:

- What ways are you currently serving?
- Does your child know you are serving?
- Read John 13:34-35 again. Does the way you prioritize your time reflect Jesus?

As your child gets older, take it a step further—let them serve with you. Prepare the communion trays together or greet at the doors before service. Let them be the hands and feet of Jesus with you. Then, talk about how you served and what you learned from it. Grow in your love of serving others together.

Take time to reflect:

- What is a way I can serve with my kids at their current age?

Finally, pray with your child. Ask God to teach them about Jesus and how much he loves them. Let your child hear you pray for their salvation. Ask your child what they want to pray for. Remember that no prayer request is silly or unnecessary. Pray together when they wake up, before they take a big test, or on the way to a sporting event. Show your kids the importance of having a conversation with God. Teach them that prayer means telling God how much we love him, asking him for guidance, and thanking him for His gifts.

Take time to reflect:

- When is the last time you prayed with your child?
- When are intentional times you can pray with your kids?

For further reflection:

- What was the role of church in your life as a child?
- What can you do during the week to partner with TPCC to help your child experience Jesus?



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Looking for additional resources to continue your journey influencing your child's faith? Check out these books and children's Bibles:

- *The Sticky Faith Guide to Families* by Dr. Kara E. Powell
- *Boundaries for Kids* by Henry Cloud & John Townsend
- *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity* by Reggie Joiner & Carey Nieuwhof
- *Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family* by Paul David Tripp
- *Jesus Calling Storybook Bible*
- *Hands On Bible NLT*



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FAMILY DEDICATION CELEBRATION: WHAT'S NEXT?

This tool is designed for you to walk through what it means to intentionally parent, and to make the commitment to raise your children to love Jesus and follow him. The ages of your kids doesn't matter. Parents can do this if their kids are 2 months, 2 years, or 12 years old!

We want to help you throw a dedication celebration as a family, and it's best done in community so you can be encouraged and prayed for. If you're going to be hosting a family dedication, as a group or as a family, here are some tips and things that you need to know:

If you're already in a group:

- Have each family read the materials and talk through the discussion questions on their own.
- Come together for a Family Dedication celebration. This can include the members of your group, or you can invite grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.
- During this celebration, read the commitments you've made to grow in your walk with Jesus and the Bible verse you have selected as your family verse.
- Have every person who attends write a prayer for your child. Pray over your kids and have others pray for them, too.
- Celebrate together! Enjoy a meal, desserts, or simply take time together as a group.
- Print out the "homework card" at the end of this curriculum and fill it out as a way to remember what you've learned and how you want to pray for your child.

If you're not in a group yet:

- Read through the materials and think through the discussion questions.
- Think about who makes up your community and who will hold you accountable for raising your children intentionally (your child's grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, or close friends). Invite these people to your home for a Family Dedication celebration, talk through questions with them. After you talk through the questions, read the Family Dedication Vow (see next page) in front of them, and then pray over each child together.
- Celebrate together! Enjoy a meal, desserts, or simply time together!



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FAMILY DEDICATION VOW

Today, we come before God and our community to vow our dedication of this child to Christ. In doing so, we commit ourselves, by God's grace, to live in such a way that shows him/her what it means to love and follow Jesus.

We promise to teach him/her that the Bible is God's word and that God desires us to have a relationship with him and his son, Jesus.

We will keep our family within a church body and community that follow the example of Jesus. We will allow the church to invest in our child and build upon the spiritual foundation we set at home.

Today, we vow before God to trust in him and his purposes for our child by praying for his/her salvation. We vow to let him lead our actions and conversations so that each day, our child knows Jesus better.