

Baby Dedication



How to use this resource

Suggested guideline to use this resource:

1 month before dedication

Meet with/contact parents and give 'Identifying your core values', 'Letter to Mum' and 'Letter to Dad'. (The letters could be put in envelopes like a real letter). After they have had sufficient time to go through the core values, organise a time to meet with them and discuss why they chose these and how they imagine they are going to implement them.

3 weeks before dedication

Meet with parents and talk to them about their faith journey. Encourage them to write their own faith stories using the questions outline provided if needed. Encourage them to ask family members (e.g. grandparents) and/or godparents to write theirs too.

2 weeks before dedication

Meet with parents and discuss what a 'Blessing' is. Give parents the 'Baby Reflection' to answer questions and use this to help them write a Blessing for them to read at the dedication.

1 week before dedication

- Purchase gift - box, candle and frame
- Print 'Blessing' & 'Faith Story' and place in box
- Print the promise and place in frame
- Print Baby Dedication Certificate

Dedication Day!

As part of your dedication service, feel free to discuss with parents what the contents of the gift are and why they are important and what they can be used for. Encourage parents to lead spiritually in their home and challenge them to remember to build their family around the core values they have chosen for their home. The rest of the church can also be challenged to help the parents fulfil the purposes they have for their family. This will not only remind the parents of the importance of their role as spiritual leaders, but also remind all other parents in the church of the responsibility they have in their homes.

Faith Box

- A candle – to light when saying the blessing
- Faith journal – parents to write in for kids
- A Bible
- Parents 'Blessing' and 'Faith Story'
- Frame with promise

Letter For Mum

Dear Mum,

What an exciting, terrifying and rewarding adventure you have embarked on. You are now a mum for the first, second or maybe even third time. With every child you add to your family there are new dimensions, new personalities, new great highs and great lows to experience. And as a mum, I'm sure you would agree that you wouldn't have it any other way (except maybe the poo-namis – everyone would be happier without those!).

As you embark on this next step of your journey, your church wants you to know that they are praying for you. Whether you have been attending church 1 week or 30 years, they are here to support you, to celebrate you and not to judge you. They are here to offer lots of unsolicited advice, but do it from a good and loving place.

One of the hardest things for new mums is to find time for personal prayer and Bible study. Through the sleep deprived nights and the busy days, it's often one of the first things to go. Know that you are not alone in this struggle. But be reassured that there are ways to keep a connection with Jesus through this time. Here are two tips to get you started:

1. Whether your child is one month old or 5 years old, it's never too early or too late to start having family worship. Reading simple stories from a children's Bible and saying prayers with your child are a great way to start. Let them hear you praying out loud, both at worship and throughout the day. This helps them to know that talking to God is an everyday part of life, and has the definite bonus of helping you feel connected to Him as well.
2. For yourself, find a short devotional book. If you have time for more, then great! If not, at least you have had a God moment and have focused your day.

You are without a doubt the most influential person when it comes to helping your child know Jesus and develop a faith of their own. That is not meant to scare you! It is simply meant to emphasise how important you actually are. Your personal time with God matters. The way you talk to your infant, toddler, and child in everyday life about God matters. Having family worship and prayer time matters.

We want to help you start that journey. Over the next few weeks you will be supported by your Pastor as you go through the Baby Dedication Pack. This can be a time for you, and hopefully your partner, to work together to decide how you can make and/or keep God front and centre in your family. A time for you to determine what you value most as a family, and what that will look like.

This is not a fool proof plan to having a child who never throws a tantrum and who never talks back. I wish it were!! What it will do is start you on a journey that leaves no doubt in your child's mind that not only do their parents love them unconditionally, but God loves them infinitely more than what they could ever imagine. What an incredible blessing to them that will be!

Letter For Dad

Dear Dad,

Congratulations! You have now taken on the biggest responsibility of your life, maybe for the second, third or even fifteenth time! Raising a child is no walk in the park and chances are they didn't come with an instruction manual (not that you would read it!). Deep in the back of your mind you are possibly doubting whether you have what it takes to do this job, questioning if God knew what he was doing by putting you in charge. Fact is we all feel this way. Your father did, and his father before that. If you are blessed enough to have a great dad, I am sure you can think of many times he still got it wrong, and if your dad was not around then you will be feeling even more confused as to what you are supposed to be doing. Sound ominous? Well before you go and request a refund and try and return your new acquisition hear me out...

Your child is the greatest source of joy you will find in this world. Simply put, their happiness is experienced tenfold in you. Whenever they achieve success or enjoyment, you will be the one that they will want to share it with. You are their whole world and the attention that you give them will fill them up in a way that nothing else can. Being the best dad is easy, you just be the best dad you can be. Your best is enough, God will do the rest. Enjoy each moment with your child to the full! They will only be this big (or little) today! Tell them daily that you love them and when they make mistakes tell them that you love them again. When they do something worthy of affirmation give it to them! Your praise is of infinite worth.

Possibly the most key ingredient in being the best dad you can be is to ensure that your relationship with God is strong. Being connected to God will mean you are connected to the greatest source of wisdom and power in all the universe! Here are a few simple tips:

1. Whether your child is one month old or 5 years old, it's never too early or too late to start having family worship. Reading simple stories from a children's Bible and saying prayers with your child are a great way to start. Let them hear you praying out loud, both at worship and throughout the day. This helps them to know that talking to God is an everyday part of life, and has the definite bonus of helping you feel connected to Him as well.
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Identifying Your Core Family Values

As you prepare for the dedication of your child, it is timely to imagine what you would like your home to look like as your child grows up in it.

With the busyness of life and external expectations creating pressures for families, it is great to have some values to align to ensure that home you want for your children is the one you end up with – this takes intentionality.

Set aside some time in your week to spend thinking and praying about the list below with your Spouse. You will probably need at least an hour to do this.

Choosing your Values

Your life is already shaped by your core values, even if you don't fully realise it. Your core values are:

- The things that keep you up at night
- The things you are willing to die for
- The things that guide your personal priorities

If you are not sure how to identify your core values as a family, it might help to ask yourself the following questions:

- What stirs righteous anger inside of you?
- What makes you especially happy?
- What are your most deeply held beliefs? What are you most passionate about?
- What character traits would you like your children to develop?
- How would you like guests to feel when they enter your home?
- How do you think God is prompting you?

It can be helpful to go through the list individually and mark out your top 5 values that you want to instill into your child or have evident in your home. Once you have done this separately, come together and see if/where there are overlaps.

If you prefer, you can go through the list and mark your top 10 together.

Talk about what these specific values mean to you to ensure you are able to parent in a united way.

Pray for God's guidance before choosing from this list of values to articulate what "Your Care Family Values" are:

Accountability	Evangelism	Joy	Respect
Attitude	Excellence	Justice	Sacrifice
Authenticity	Faith	Kindness	Self-control
Boldness	Faithfulness	Knowing God	Self-discipline
Character	Family	Leadership	Selflessness
Collaboration	Fellowship	Learning	Servant
Compassion	Generosity	Loyalty	Serving
Confidence	Gentleness	Mercy	Steadfastness
Courage	Godliness	Obedience	Stewardship
Creativity	Goodness	Openness	Submission
Dedication	Grace	Order	Teachable
Devotion	Gratefulness	Passion	Teamwork
Discipleship	Growth	Patience	Thankfulness
Discipline	Honesty	Peace	Transparency
Discovery	Honour	Perseverance	Trustworthiness
Diversity	Hope	Personal Growth	Truth
Efficiency	Humility	Prayer	Unity
Encouragement	Humour	Purity	Wisdom
Endurance	Integrity	Relationships	Worship
Enthusiasm	Intimacy	Reliability	Zeal

Other: (Please feel free to include values not on the list)

Narrow the list to between 8 to 10 core values and write them in the space below. It is important for both parents to feel they have contributed equally to this process.

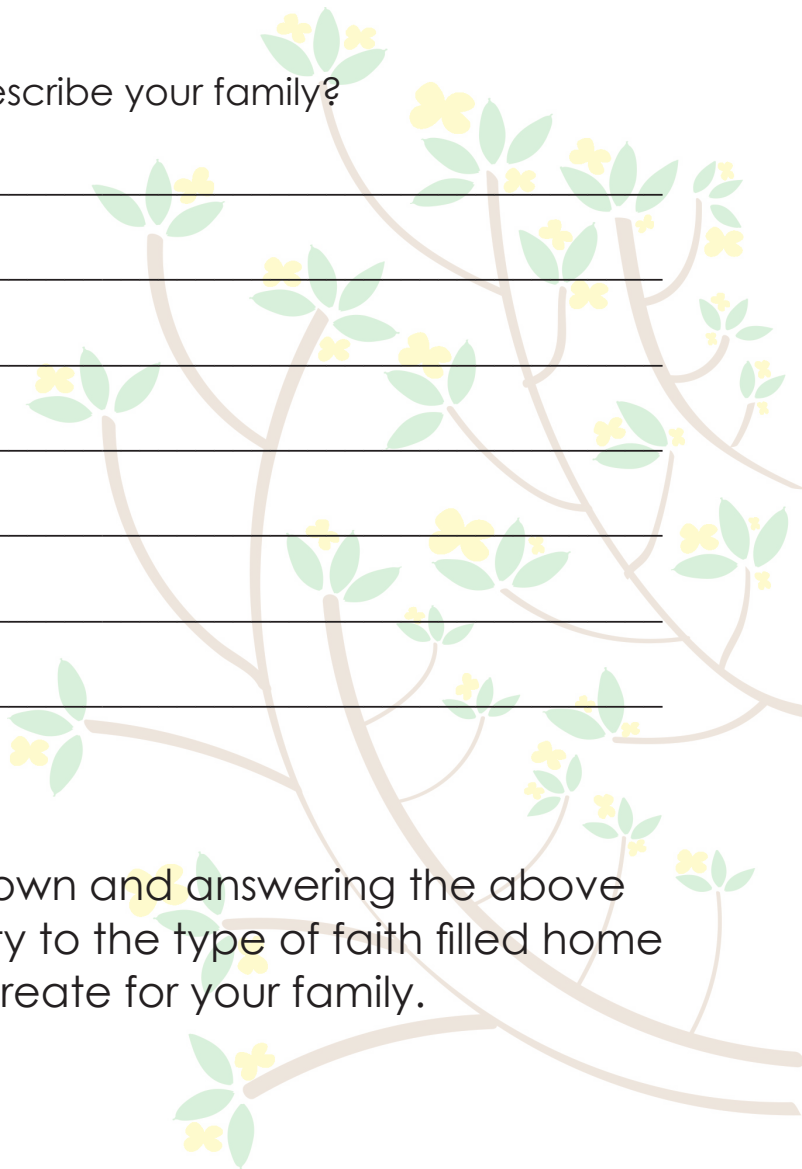


Answer the following questions to give your family further alignment and help keep you on track for how you want to lead your family.

1. What do you want your dream family to look like?

2. What do you want others to say of your family?

3. How do you hope God would describe your family?



Through writing your values down and answering the above questions, you have given clarity to the type of faith filled home you are hoping to create for your family.

Writing A Faith Story

Faith Story Option 1: Specific turning point leading to Salvation

(This first section only needs to be short)

Before I trusted in Christ

1. Identify what your life was like. What were your attitudes, needs and/or problems? From what did you get your security or happiness? How did those areas begin to disappoint you? To what source did you look for security, peace of mind, or happiness? In what ways were your activities unsatisfying?
2. Find 2-3 words to describe what only Christ could fill or do in your life (eg loneliness, feelings of insignificance, anger, rejection).
3. Briefly share a personal example that captures the needs and attitudes from this time of your life as identified above.

How you came to know Christ

Write when and how you first heard the gospel and/or were exposed to Christianity. What brought you to the place of being willing to listen? Who influenced you? How and when did you decide to follow Jesus? Describe how you felt, what truths you heard, what you thought about them, how you felt after you made the decision. Use one or two bible verses in this section that became meaningful to you through this journey.

My life after knowing Jesus

1. What conditions in your life before Christ have now been satisfied by a relationship with Him? What does it look like in your life to have a relationship with Christ? How long did it take before you noticed changes? What are your blessings? Where do you struggle? How do you depend on Him through those struggles? What difference does having Him in your life make during those times? Emphasize what you have learned about God's grace to you. What role does your church family have in keeping your faith alive and strong?
2. Share a personal illustration that shows the wonderful difference that Christ has made in your life.
3. Wrap it up by sharing with your child what hope you have for them in their journey with Jesus.

Faith Story Option 2: Believer to Christ-Follower

Those who trusted Jesus as children often feel they 'have nothing to tell' because they don't have a dramatic story. Yet, your story is one every parent wants for their children! In the case of childhood believers, there occurs a decision to follow Christ as His disciple where more obvious life changes occurred. This could have happened as a child, a teenager as a young adult, or even multiple times as you matured in faith. If you are in this category, therefore, focus on those turning points in telling your story.

Before I became Jesus' disciple

1. Identify what your life was like as a young Christian or living as just a believer not a disciple. Share when and how you first heard the gospel and/or were exposed to Christianity. What were your attitudes, needs and/or problems? From what did you get your security or happiness?
2. Briefly share a personal example that captures the needs and attitudes from this time of your life as identified above.

What brought you to decide to become Jesus' disciple?

What brought you to the place of being willing to listen or of wanting to be more than just a believer? Who influenced you? How and when did you decide to be Jesus' disciple? Describe how you felt, what truths you heard, what you thought about them, how you felt after you made the decision. Use 1 or 2 relevant scripture verses that God used to draw you to Himself. Emphasize what you have learned about God's grace to you.

My life after becoming Jesus' disciple

1. What conditions before this time have now been satisfied by a deeper relationship with Him? How long did it take before you noticed changes? What does it look like in your life to have this closer relationship with Christ? What are your blessings? Where do you struggle? How do you depend on Him through these struggles? What difference does having Him in your life make during those times? What remarkable thing has Jesus done in your life (or in the last three years)? What role does your church family have in keeping your faith alive and strong?
2. Share a personal illustration that shows the wonderful difference that following Christ has made in your life.
3. Wrap it up by sharing with your child what hope you have for them in their journey with Jesus.



Lined writing area with horizontal lines.



Blessing Your Child

What does it mean to give a blessing? What actions and attitudes combine to make this Biblical tool so uniquely effective?

The blessing as described in Scripture always included five elements:

1. Meaningful and appropriate touch
2. A spoken message
3. Attaching high value to the one being blessed
4. Picturing a special future for him or her
5. An active commitment to fulfill the blessing

Let's take a quick look at each of these.

Meaningful Touch

Meaningful touch was an essential element in bestowing the blessing in Old Testament homes. So it was with Isaac when he went to bless his son. We read in Genesis 27:26 that Isaac said, "Come near now and kiss me, my son." This incident was not an isolated one. Each time the blessing was given in the Scriptures, a meaningful touch provided a caring background to the words that would be spoken. Kissing, hugging or the laying on of hands were all a part of bestowing the blessing.

Meaningful touch has many beneficial effects. The act of touch is key in communicating warmth, personal acceptance, affirmation, even physical health. For any person who wishes to bless a child, touch is an integral part of that blessing.

A Spoken Message

The second element of the blessing involves a spoken message — one that is actually put into words. In many homes today such words of love and acceptance are seldom received. Parents in these homes assume that simply being present communicates the blessing — a tragic misconception. A blessing fulfills its purpose only when it is actually verbalized — spoken in person, written down or preferably both.

For a child in search of the blessing, silence communicates mostly confusion. Children who are left to fill in the blanks when it comes to what their parents think about them will often fail the test when it comes to feeling valuable and secure. Spoken or written words at least give the child an indication that he or she is worthy of some attention.

Abraham spoke his blessing to his son Isaac. Isaac spoke a blessing to his son Jacob. Jacob gave a verbal blessing to each of his twelve sons and to two of his grandchildren. When God blessed us with the gift of his Son, it was his Word that "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). God has always been a God of words.

“But I don’t yell at my children or cut them down like some parents,” some may say. Unfortunately, the lack of negative words will not necessarily translate into a verbal blessing. To see the blessing bloom and grow in the life of a child, we need to verbalize our message. Good intentions aside, good words — spoken, written and preferably both — are necessary to communicate genuine acceptance.

Attaching High Value

Meaningful touch and a spoken (or written) message — these first two elements lead up to the content of the words themselves. To convey the blessing, the words must attach high value to the person being blessed.

In blessing Jacob (thinking it was Esau), Isaac said, “Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed. ... Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you” (Gen. 27:27, 29).

That pictures a very valuable person! Not just anybody merits having nations bow down to him! And while we might think that calling a person a field would be criticizing him, that is not the case. A blessed field was one where there was tremendous growth and life and reward. Just ask a farm kid what a record crop, all ready to harvest, means to his or her parents. That’s the picture Isaac gives his son.

As you may have noticed, Isaac uses a word picture (the field) to describe how valuable his son is to him. Word pictures are a powerful way of communicating acceptance. In the Old Testament they were a key to communicating to a child a message of high value — the third element of the family blessing.

Picturing a Special Future

A fourth element of the blessing is the way it pictures a special future for the person being blessed. Isaac said to his son Jacob, “May God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth. ... Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you” (Gen. 27:28–29).

Even today, Jewish homes are noted for picturing a special future for their children. One story I heard illustrates this activity very well.

Sidel, a young Jewish mother, was proudly walking down the street, pushing a stroller with her infant twins. As she rounded the corner, she saw her neighbor, Sarah. “My, what beautiful children,” Sarah cooed. “What are their names?” Pointing to each child, Sidel replied, “This is Bennie, the doctor, and Reuben, the lawyer.”

This woman believed her children had great potential and a special future before them. Isaac believed the same about his son and communicated that in his blessing — as we should communicate to those we seek to bless.

One distinction should be made between Isaac’s blessing and the act of picturing a special future for a person today. Because of Isaac’s unique position as a patriarch

(God's appointed leader and a father of the nation of Israel), his words to Jacob carried with them the weight of biblical prophecy. We today cannot predict another person's future with such biblical accuracy. But we can help those we are blessing see a future that is full of light and opportunity. We can let them know we believe they can build an outstanding life and future with the strengths and abilities God has given them.

Our Lord himself speaks quite eloquently about our future in the Bible. In fact, he goes to great lengths to assure us of our present relationship with him and of the ocean full of blessings in store for us as his children.

We need to picture just such a special future for our children if we are serious about giving them our blessing. With this fourth element of the blessing, a child can gain a sense of security in the present and grow in confidence to serve God and others in the future.

An Active Commitment

The last element of the blessing concerns the responsibility that goes with giving the blessing. For the patriarchs, not only their words but God himself stood behind the blessing they bestowed on their children. Several times God spoke directly through the angel of the Lord to the patriarchs confirming his active commitment to their family line.

Parents today, in particular, need to rely on the Lord to give them the strength and staying power to confirm their children's blessing by expressing such an active commitment. They, too, have God's Word through the Scriptures as a guide, plus the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Why is active commitment so important when it comes to bestowing the blessing? Words alone cannot communicate the blessing; they need to be backed with a willingness to do everything possible to help the one blessed be successful. We can tell a child, "You have the talent to be a very good pianist." But if we neglect to provide a piano for that child to practice on, our lack of commitment has undermined our message.

When it comes to spending time together or helping develop a certain skill, some children hear, "Wait until the weekend." Then it becomes, "Wait until another weekend" so many times that they no longer believe the words of blessing.

The fifth element of the blessing, an active commitment, is crucial to communicating the blessing in our homes.

At Home with the Family Blessing

That's a brief overview of the five elements of the blessing that can become a life-changing part of how we do family. Provide the five basic ingredients of the blessing — meaningful touch, a spoken (or written) message, attaching high value to the one being blessed, picturing a special future for him or her, and confirming the blessing by an active commitment — and personal acceptance can thrive in a home.

Why Write?

Both the spoken word and the written word are important in giving the blessing. For several reasons, however, we are suggesting that you put your words of blessing into written form first, before you share them out loud with your child.

First of all, ideally, your written blessing will also be spoken — we will include ideas for doing that below. But writing your words out first can take away a lot of pressure. You have the opportunity to put the words together at your leisure. You can double-check that you have included all the elements of the blessing and that your words convey exactly what you want. And if your words have been chosen ahead of time, when you do speak your blessing, you can concentrate on connecting with your child.

Another reason to write out your blessing, though, is that a written blessing can be saved. The words can be read and reread, and the paper it is written on can be tucked away as a keepsake. Written blessings can also be sent by letter or e-mail and thus cover great distances. A written blessing has the capacity to bring warmth and light and love to your child again and again throughout his or her life — far beyond the mere ink marks on paper.

What Do I Say?

Keep in mind that there is no wrong way to craft a blessing, and there are lots of creative right ways. And whether it comes out all at once in a rush of words or takes you a few tries and several evenings to outline and polish what you want to say, your child will cherish both what you write and what it represents about your relationship.

How you actually do the writing depends on what you are comfortable with. Some people work best in pencil on a yellow legal pad. Others can't even think without a word processor. You could even talk into a voice recorder and then transcribe your words.

And what should you say? Your words can be plain or poetic. They just need to carry with them a picture of your blessing that can help your child know that he or she is of high value to you.

Sharing Your Blessing With Your Child

Once you have written your words of blessing, we encourage you to talk with your spouse (if you're married) and pick a special time and place to share these words with your child. If at all possible, do it face-to-face. Pick a meaningful time, place or event — a family affair with lots of friends and relatives, a milestone celebration such as a birth or graduation, or a quiet dinner with just the two of you. Just make sure that it is at a time and place that allows you to be quiet long enough to read or recite the blessing you have written to your son or daughter.

Don't forget to include the element of meaningful, appropriate touch along with your blessing — a hand on the head, an arm around the shoulder and hopefully a big hug. You might even want to snap a picture of the two of you together or give the

child a keepsake copy of your blessing done in a special font, calligraphy or just your best handwriting.

What if you can't be physically present — if you are deployed overseas, for instance, or divorced and living across the country? If you will be together soon, why not write out your blessing now and wait until you are together to deliver it? But don't wait too long. You can always write out your blessing in your best handwriting or format it on the computer and put it in the mail. You could even do a video of your blessing and e-mail it to your child or do the whole thing via Skype.

Keep in mind that there is no wrong way of giving a child your blessing. Even if you choose to do a special dinner and burn the hamburgers, if it rains on the one night you have counted on a starlit sky, if the dog decides to throw up just before the special event or the camera batteries fail, it doesn't really matter. If you will write down your words and make your plans, I believe you will find that God just works it out!

The fact that your child receives your blessing is far more important than any challenges you face in delivering it. It is your blessing, prepared just for him or her. And however you choose to deliver it, make sure your child has a copy of your written words.

Before you actually get to work on your written blessing, there are a few more things I would urge you to keep in mind. First, don't assume your children will automatically know your heart or "just figure out" what you think about them. How you choose to bless a child is not nearly as important as making that choice — being intentional about the blessing.

A Lifetime of Blessing

But don't stop there.

The kind of planned, formal blessing we have described can be wonderful and life-changing, but if you really want your child to thrive, you will not only give the blessing but also live it, seeking out ways to include meaningful touch, spoken and written words, messages of high value and a special future, and evidence of active commitment in every day you spend together, every moment.

At the breakfast table and over bedtime prayers, some parents memorize a little blessing to say or sing to their children at these moments.

In the car on the way to school (that can be the perfect time for an offhand conversation with a teen).

While on the soccer field, in the movie theater, at church, at the park or in the backyard, look for ways to inject little words of blessing in everyday conversation. Make it a habit, and the blessings will flow through your life.



Baby Reflection

Take some time to reflect, pray and talk together about the following 4 questions.

1. Describe in a few sentences the blessing that your baby is to you and your family. This can feel overwhelming, but just use your own words to express the love you have for your little one.



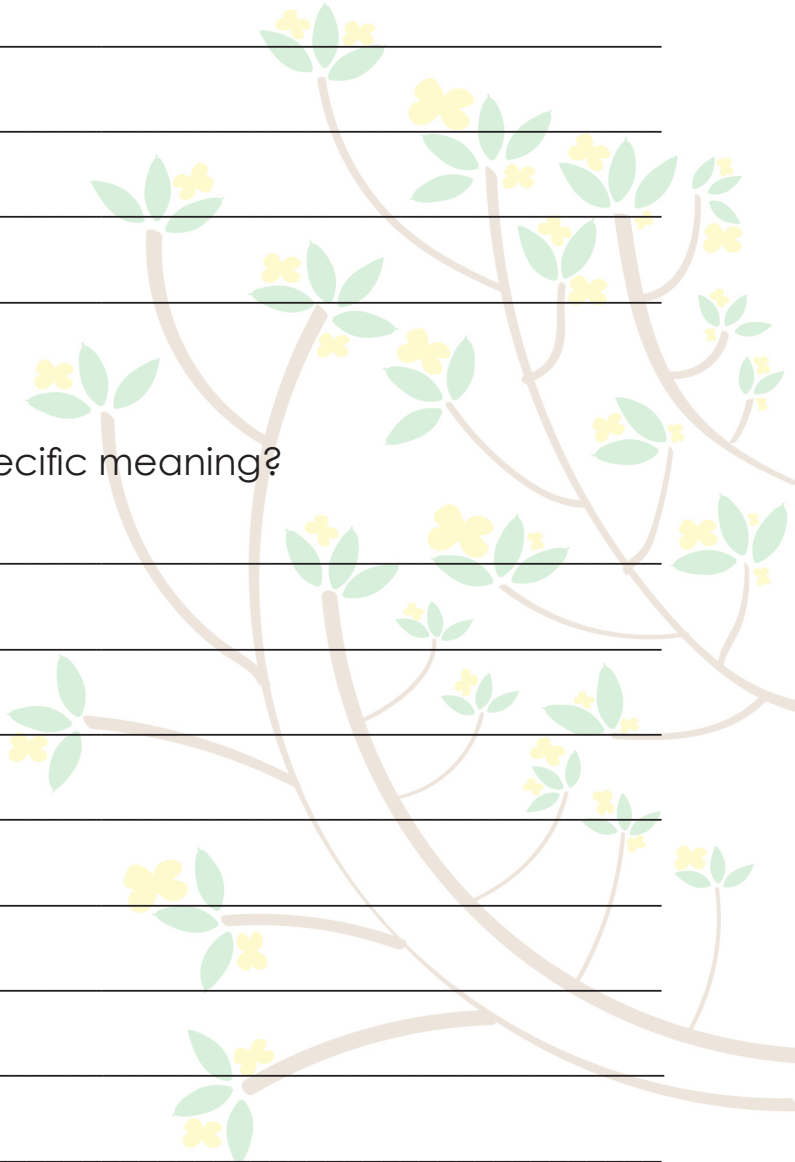
2. Together, think of 3 Christian Character traits that you would like to see developed in your baby as she/he grows up? (What Biblical qualities do you desire to see manifested in your child?)

3. Describe specifically how you see God could use your child for His Kingdom as an adult. What influence would you hope they would have?

Horizontal lines for writing the answer to question 3.

4. Does your child's name have a specific meaning?

Horizontal lines for writing the answer to question 4.



Blessing Examples

BLESSING FOR A NEWBORN



Heavenly Father,

We pray for your abundant blessings on this little newborn.

We look at this adorable child and by faith we see:

Soft little ears that will one day hear and receive the message of God's love and grace.

Bright little eyes that will one day notice the needs of others, and look for ways to express God's love to the world.

Precious little fingers that will one day reach out with acts of kindness to the world.

Cute little feet with tiny little toes that will one day grow into beautiful confident feet that will bring the Good News of Jesus to the world.

Lord, we also see a tender little heart.

God, we pray that this child will always have an open heart to you and to your word.

May this child grow up to be a mighty man or woman of God.

Amen

BLESSING FOR A TEENAGER

The Blessing of Sophie Catton

Sophie, you are my daughter whom I love.

You are well equipped with everything you need to fulfill your destiny as a woman of God. Before the foundation of the earth, God Almighty planned for your life and planned for you to be a woman. Psalm 139 says that He created your inmost being. He knit you together in your mother's womb. You are fearfully and wonderfully made.

All the days ordained for you were written by God even before you were born. There is nothing that you will ever need to do to become a woman because God has made you one. Today, we are simply recognizing publicly what God has done in you.

Sophie, God has made you intelligent—you have a strong mind. God has made you beautiful. I've also noticed since the time you were a little girl that our Lord has given you a great ability to understand right and wrong, good and evil. You are able to quickly read and understand people. You get along with everyone and are well-respected and well thought of by others, young and old alike. You are a leader and have used your leadership skills to make wise decisions concerning your friends and in many other areas of your life.

I am beyond joyful that God has given you to our family as a gift. You are a wonderful daughter. I love you and bless you with the promises of God. You are His and have been set apart from the world for his Holy purposes. I bless you with God's everlasting love, wisdom, peace, and joy. I bless you with purity, marital fidelity, and many children of your own. May God continue to keep His hand of favor and prosper you in all that you do, and may you serve our Lord Jesus Christ all the days of your life.

I AM

I AM THE CHILD OF A KING
WHO IS NOT MOVED BY
THE WORLD FOR MY GOD
IS WITH ME AND GOES
BEFORE ME. I DO NOT
FEAR BECAUSE I AM

HIS

