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# Five Parental Promises for the Faithful Discipleship of Children

In 1982, and again in 1985, Sally and I stood before our brothers and sisters in Christ, a new baby in our arms, and made five promises in a special service of dedication. Then in 2005, in what seemed like a blink of an eye, and again in 2008 and 2011, I was standing before my eldest daughter, her husband, and their brothers and sisters in Christ, with each of our grandchildren in their arms, making the same five promises in similar services of dedication.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of standing before hundreds of parents as the words of the same five promises have taken root in my own heart, the hearts of those parents, and the hearts of the people in the two congregations that I have served. These promises have been a consistent reminder to Sally and me of the high and holy calling upon our lives as parents, while serving as a foundation for our ministry to parents and children in those churches. Countless times, I have reminded parents of these promises for their encouragement in various seasons of their lives. The promises have also served as a regular reminder to both congregations of our corporate responsibility as God's people to support and participate in the efforts of the church to invest in the faith and the discipleship of the next generation.

This little book is an attempt to unpack the significance, meaning, and implication of each of the five promises. As helpful as I hope it will be to parents who are preparing to make these promises, the benefit is not limited to using them in a church's child dedication service. I am hoping this resource will also serve those parents who are not part of a church tradition that practices child dedication or a church that does not use these specific promises as part of its dedication services.

**Whether we stand before our brothers and sisters in Christ and make these promises or not, we will all one day stand before our King of kings and Lord of lords. On that great day, may God find us to be faithful servants and stewards of the precious gifts that He has entrusted to us.**

Though the five promises have been at the center of a precious tradition in the churches that I served, they represent the biblical calling and responsibility that rests on all Christian parents who have been entrusted with children to raise for the glory of their Creator. Whether we stand before our brothers and sisters in Christ and make these promises or not, we will all one day stand before our King of kings and Lord of lords. On that great day, may God find us to be faithful servants and stewards of the precious gifts that He has entrusted to us.

### **Child Dedication—A Working Definition**

The dedication of children is an act of faith in the presence of God and His people in which we solemnly and earnestly offer our children up to God for His wise and sovereign purposes in their lives, and offer ourselves up to God for the holy responsibility of

being biblical parents and raising our children in the fear, knowledge, and joy of the Lord.

I will unpack this definition more and refer to it as we look closely at the five promises. However, before going any further, I want to acknowledge at the outset that this definition and the wording for each of the promises were crafted by John Piper in his first year of pastoral ministry at Bethlehem Baptist Church. Except for a couple of modest adjustments, the promises are the same as they were when John presided over his first dedication service more than 40 years ago.