

Discussion Questions

Lesson One: Why Do We Have Godparents?

1. Have your godparents been active guides in your spiritual life?
2. Review the Christian baptismal liturgy, either in memory or in The Book of Common Prayer. What jumps out at you about how that liturgy presents the role of the godparent?
3. The godparent/godchild relationship is a spiritual win-win relationship. As a godparent (if you are one), what have you gained from your relationship with your godchild? If you are anticipating being a godparent, what spiritual benefits do you hope to gain from the relationship?

Lesson Two: Godparenting and the Bible

1. If you are Episcopalian, what aspects of the Baptismal Covenant come to mind most often as you live a Christian life? What would you emphasize to a godchild about living according to the Baptismal Covenant?
2. Does your congregation have particular customs in relation to baptism? Is there anything special you do? Have you ever witnessed a baptism outside your denomination or different from what you are used to that interested you? If so, describe your response to them.
3. If you have been/were to be invited to be a godparent, describe how you see/would see your role as a godparent to your godchild. Summarize your expectations of the role.

Lesson Three: The Godparent's Role

1. What gifts, skills, and interests do you bring to the role of godparent that benefit (or that you anticipate benefiting) your relationship with your godchild?
2. Have you asked anyone to be a godparent to a child or to someone else connected with you? How did you decide what qualities you wanted that person to have?
3. Can you be a good godparent if you are not receiving spiritual benefit from the relationship? Why or why not?

Lesson Four: Being a Godparent

1. The church community plays an important part in the life of the godchild. How does your church community support godparents and the newly baptized?
2. Compose advice, a prayer, or poetry that you would want to share with a godchild or that you will use in prayer for a godchild. Share if so inclined.
3. The greatest gifts that a godparent can give a child are love, prayers, and their continuous presence as a Christian model of faith. Reflect and share ideas as to how to make these gifts alive and meaningful to godchildren.

The Takeaway

Why Do We Have Godparents?

Godparents are persons chosen to help in the spiritual formation of the godchild's new life in Christ. During the baptismal liturgy, they speak on behalf of the godchild, and they renew their own commitment to God. Throughout their lives, the godchild and godparent are in a spiritual relationship – the godparent is there for the child and the godparent's faith will also be strengthened. Godparents are a tradition because parents and new Christians can use help. Having a companion on the journey is important. Godparents are asked to hold a sacred trust – to be responsible for the spiritual teachings of a child or to offer consistent guidance to the adult they are ushering into the Christian life. We know that developing an understanding of God does not happen in isolation. Historically, three witnesses were present and that believers brought friends to meet Jesus. The word "godparent" came into use around 1,000 AD. Before that they were called sponsor, co-father, co-mother, guarantor, friend, or surety. Often, they were a part of the extended family and, if needed, would raise the godchildren.

Godparenting and the Bible

Godparenting origins are found in the Hebrew Scriptures, (i.e. Proverbs 22:6) in the story of David and Jonathan (1 Samuel) when David cares for Jonathan's son after Jonathan's death. In the New Testament, people brought family and friends to meet Jesus, Andrew told his brother Peter about Jesus, and people brought children to Jesus. Early Church evidence shows that baptism of children was common. Augustine said that the godparents may present a child for baptism, and this approach became the norm. During the Reformation, the importance of the parents was brought back to the forefront. Throughout history, churches revisit the sacrament of Baptism to reflect the realities of today. There may be different nuances, but the theological focus of bringing those we love to Christ and nurturing them in faith, is the same.

The Role of Godparents

We cannot understand the godparent's unique role until we understand everyone's role in baptism. The baptismal ceremony celebrates and formalizes these roles. God – calls us to join in Creation, in the life and ministry of Jesus, and in the strength of the Holy Spirit. God initiates the action, and the people are invited to respond in a community of faith.

- The Community – The godchild is expected to play a part within the community to return the support of the group and to be a representative of God and the community to the world.
- The Individual – the godchild has an innate sense of God's call and responds to God's call.
- The Parents – recognize the importance of the child's wanting and needing to belong and want to present the child to God and the church to begin the process of becoming full followers of Jesus. They invite the godparents to be accountability partners for the benefit of the children. In the case of adults, they agree to sponsor and mentor new Christians in their lives in Christ.

The Takeaway, Continued

- The Godparents – present the child or adult for baptism and help them how to be Christians and accept and welcome God into their lives. This covenant is a sacramental agreement offered by God and accepted by the people to be in partnership together. In the service, the Godparents presents the candidate for baptism and agree to be good Christian examples. They speak the prayers and recommitments and are a part of the leadership of the ceremony.

Being a Godparent

- Keep praying and dedicate yourself to God for this role.
- Talk with the parents about your understanding of the role and clarify expectations.
- Use age-appropriate methods to enhance their spiritual growth and deepen their relationship with God.
- Share your stories of God and faith and use creative ways to connect with the child.
- Celebrate yearly their baptism.
- Encourage service to others and stewardship of God's creation.
- Share your ministry activities with the child.
- Give gifts that are symbolic such as Bibles, Bible videos, music, Advent Calendars, etc.
- Let them know you are there for them and will mentor them through all that is ahead of them.
- Be a sacramental presence for this person and you will see God reflected in them.

Further Research

Books

- ["Baptism"](#) by Mike Kinman.
- [Christ's Own Forever](#). Interactive Journal for parents and godparents.
- [Walk in Love: Episcopal Beliefs and Practices](#) (2018) by Scott Gunn and Melody Shobe. Chapters 2 and 3 deal specifically with baptism.
- [Taking the Plunge: Baptism and Parenting](#) (2006) by Anne Kitch

ChurchNext Courses on Similar Topics

- [Introducing Christian Baptism with Anne Kitch](#)
- [Preparing for Infant and Children's Baptism with Anne Kitch](#)
- [Preparing for Adult Baptism with Anne Kitch](#)

How to Be a Godparent With Nancy McLaughlin Participant's Guide

Welcome!

While the word 'Godparent' is nowhere in the Bible, it is all over Christian history.

From very early on Christians began baptizing their children as a way to form healthy believers, in keeping with the admonition in the book of Proverbs which says, 'Train up a child in the way they should go and when they are old they shall not depart from it.'

Nancy McLaughlin has written books on baptism and taught in numerous ministry programs. Her video lectures include:

- Why Godparents?
- Godparents and the Bible
- The Godparent's Role
- Being a Godparent

This course is perfect for Godparents and Godparents-to-be- especially those who are out-of-town and want to know more about the role before they attend the ceremony.

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