THE QUESTION

Did Ignatius tell Christians to respect a bishop who is young?

Asked by a THF member on August 1, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 8 numbered quotations · the 11 early Christian passages and 34 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/did-ignatius-tell-christians-to-respect-a-bishop-who-is-young

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

Yes. In his letter to the Magnesians, Ignatius tells a church not to look down on its bishop because he is young. Even the church's holy elders submitted to him, he says, because they were really honoring God the Father. The longer version adds that youth devoted to God should never be despised.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
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POINT 1 OF 7

Do not look down on a young bishop

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Ignatius writes to the church at Magnesia, whose bishop was young. He tells them not to treat him lightly because of his age. Instead they should give him full respect, as a way of honoring God the Father.

1

"It is important for you not to treat your bishop too casually because of his youth, but to show him full respect, honoring the authority of God the Father, as I have seen even holy elders do."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Magnesians* (c. 98–117 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 2, page 5 Read it in the library ›

POINT 2 OF 7

Holy elders submitted to their young bishop

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Ignatius points to the church's own elders as an example. They did not judge the bishop by how young he looked. The longer version says they looked instead at his knowledge of God. In submitting to him, they were really submitting to the Father.

2

"They do not judge hastily based on their bishop's youthful appearance, but being wise in God, they submit to him—or rather, not to him, but to the Father of Jesus Christ, the bishop of us all."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Magnesians* (c. 98–117 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 2, page 5 Read it in the library ›

3

"Now it is also your duty not to disregard the age of your bishop, but to give him all respect, according to the will of God the Father, as I have known even holy elders do, not focusing on the apparent youth of their bishop, but on his knowledge of God; since "not the ancient are necessarily wise, nor do the aged understand prudence; but there is a spirit in people."'"

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Magnesians* (c. 98–117 AD)
THF's updated English

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POINT 3 OF 7

Disrespect is really aimed at God

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Ignatius warns that a person who fails to honor the bishop does not fool the bishop they can see. He is trying to mock the God he cannot see, who knows every secret.

4 “Therefore, it is right for you to obediently follow your bishop, sincerely honoring Him who has willed us to do so, since those who do not deceive not the visible bishop, but attempt to mock Him who is invisible.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Magnesians* (c. 98–117 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 2, page 5 Read it in the library ›

POINT 4 OF 7

God has used the young before

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The longer version of the letter lists young people God used, such as Samuel and Jeremiah. From these examples it draws a rule: youth given to God should not be despised, while an old man with a wicked mind should be.

5 “Samuel, when he was just a little child, reproved Eli, who was ninety years old, for honoring his sons more than God. Similarly, Jeremiah received this message from God, "Do not say, I am a child."”

later in the same passage

“Therefore, youth is not to be despised when it is devoted to God. But one of a wicked mind ought to be despised, even if he is old, and full of wicked days.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Magnesians* (c. 98–117 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 1, page 5 Read it in the library ›

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POINT 5 OF 7

Timothy was young too

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The longer version also recalls Timothy, a young leader. It cites Paul's charge to him not to let anyone despise his youth, but to be an example in word and conduct.

6 “Timothy the Christ-bearer was young, but hear what his teacher writes to him: "Let no man despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word and conduct."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Magnesians* (c. 98–117 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 1, page 5 Read it in the library ›

POINT 6 OF 7

Gray hair alone does not earn respect

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

John Chrysostom makes a related point from the other side. Old age deserves honor when a person lives in a way that fits it. An older man who acts foolishly cannot demand respect from the young.

7 “For gray hair is truly worthy of respect when a person acts in a way that fits old age. But when an old man acts like a youth, he becomes more ridiculous than the young.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Hebrews* 7 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 9, page 6 Read it in the library ›

POINT 7 OF 7

Respect leaders and honor elders

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement of Rome gives the wider rule behind this. Believers should honor Christ, respect those who lead them, and honor the elders. He also asks that young men be trained in the fear of God.

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8 “Let us honor the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was given for us; let us respect those who lead us; let us honor the elders among us; let us train the young men in the fear of God; let us guide our wives to what is good.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 10, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not say how young the bishop at Magnesia actually was.
- Several points here come from the longer version of Ignatius's letter, not the shorter one.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 11 early Christian passages and 34 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages (sources 1–11, grouped by writer, earliest first), then 34 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF’s updated English unless marked “1885 English” (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). “… [continues online]” marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *11 passages from 4 writers*

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 1–6*

1 *Epistle to the Magnesians* **Quotes 3, 5, 6, pages 2, 3, 4** “the Christ-bearer was young, but hear what his teacher writes to… [continues online] **read ›**
2 *Epistle to the Magnesians* **Quotes 1, 2, 4, pages 2, 3** “for you not to treat your bishop too casually because of his youth, but to show him full respect, honoring the authority of God the Father, as I have seen… [continues online] **read ›**
3 *Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians* “more, therefore, you see the bishop silent, the… [continues online] **read ›**
4 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* conduct and, while we still have the opportunity, exercise repentance towards God. For “in Hades there is no one who can confess their sins.” For “behold the person, and their… [continues online] **read ›**
5 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (1885 English) “is well to reverence both God and the bishop… [continues online] **read ›**
6 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* that you all follow the bishop, just as Jesus Christ follows the Father, and the presbytery as you would the apostles; and respect the deacons as being the institution of… [continues online] **read ›**

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Polycarp, *c. 100–155 AD · source 7*

7 *Epistle to the Philippians* (1885 English; on point 7) “like manner, let the young men also be blameless in all things, being especially careful to preserve purity, and keeping themselves in, as with a bridle, from every kind of… [continues online] **read ›**

John Chrysostom, *c. 386–407 AD · sources 8–9*

8 *On the Priesthood* 2 (1885 English; on point 4) “although they may say these things on your account, you will speedily teach them by your acts that understanding is not to be estimated by age, and the grey head… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Homilies on Hebrews* 7 (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 4** “them first yourself; if however thou dost not reverence your own even when old, how can you demand of the young to reverence them… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome · *sources 10–11*

10 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English) **Quote 8, page 5** “us honour the aged among us; let us train up the young men in the fear of God… [continues online] **read ›**

11 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English; on point 7) “ye did all things without respect of persons, and walked in the commandments of God, being obedient to those who had the rule over you, and giving all fitting honour… [continues online] **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *34 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Exodus 32:32

Isaiah 66:2

Matthew 10:19 · 13:27 · 20:28 · 22:39 · 24:5

Mark 8:38 · 10:43

Luke 16:15 · 21:14

John 7:37 · 15:1 · 15:12 · 21:17

Acts 20:29

1 Corinthians 6:9 · 10:33 · 12:3

Galatians 1:10 · 5:16 · 6:7

Ephesians 4:27

Philippians 1:27 · 4:8

1 Thessalonians 5:12

2 Thessalonians 3:6

1 Timothy 2:4 · 3:8 · 5:21

2 Timothy 2:12

Hebrews 13:17

1 Peter 2:11

Revelation 2:5

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Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Did Ignatius tell Christians to respect a bishop who is young?” on August 1, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY