THE QUESTION

Did the early church say a true church must trace its bishops back to the apostles?

Asked by a THF member on April 10, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 12 numbered quotations · the 32 early Christian passages and 214 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/did-the-early-church-say-a-true-church-must-trace-its-bishops-back-to-the

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

Yes, these early writers treated a line of bishops going back to the apostles as a real mark of a true church. But they did not treat it as enough alone. Tertullian and Irenaeus joined succession with keeping the same teaching the apostles gave, and they warned against groups that broke away.

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.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

IN THIS STUDY

1	The apostles appointed bishops and deacons	**2**
2	Apostolic churches could show their bishop lists	**2**
3	Succession must come with the apostles' teaching	**3**
4	The faith was handed down in order	**3**
5	Breaking away from succession was a serious fault	**4**
6	Ignatius ties the Church to its ministers	**4**
7	There is one Church and one faith	**5**
8	Belonging also means doing God's will	**5**
	What these passages don't tell us	**6**
	The Sources: 32 early Christian passages and 214 Bible verses, with links	**6**

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POINT 1 OF 8

The apostles appointed bishops and deacons

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

Clement of Rome says the apostles tested their first converts and set them in place as bishops and deacons for later believers. The Didache tells churches to choose worthy bishops and deacons and describes the kind of men they must be.

1 "Thus, preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits of their labors, having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who would later believe."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 31, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

2 "Therefore, appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons who are worthy of the Lord: men who are gentle, not lovers of money, truthful, and proven."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Didache,** *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 15 (c. 50–120 AD) **Source 1, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 8

Apostolic churches could show their bishop lists

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

Tertullian challenges groups that claim to be apostolic to show a list of bishops reaching back to an apostle. He gives examples: Smyrna traced its bishop to John, and Rome traced Clement to Peter.

3 "Let them unfold the list of their bishops, coming down in proper succession from the beginning, in such a way that their first bishop can show that his ordainer and predecessor was one of the apostles or one of the apostolic men, and moreover, a man who remained faithful with the apostles."

later in the same passage

"The church of Smyrna records that Polycarp was placed there by John. In the same way, the church of Rome says that Clement was ordained by Peter."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Prescription Against Heretics* 32 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 16, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

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POINT 3 OF 8

Succession must come with the apostles' teaching

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

Tertullian adds that even an invented list would not help a group whose teaching differs from the apostles. Irenaeus says the leaders to obey are those who have both the succession and the gift of truth.

4 "For when their doctrine is compared with the doctrine of the apostles, its very difference and opposition will show by itself that its author was neither an apostle nor an apostolic man."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Prescription Against Heretics* 32 (c. 196–220 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 16, page 7 Read it in the library ›

5 "Therefore, it is necessary to obey the presbyters in the Church—those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, along with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gift of truth, according to the good pleasure of the Father."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 15, page 7 Read it in the library ›

POINT 4 OF 8

The faith was handed down in order

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

Origen notes that many who claim Christ disagree. His answer is that the Church's teaching has been passed down in an orderly line from the apostles, and true teaching is what agrees with it.

6 "In the same way, since there are many who think they hold the opinions of Christ, and yet some of them think differently from those before them, the teaching of the Church, handed down in orderly succession from the apostles and remaining in the Churches to the present day, is still preserved."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *De Principiis (On First Principles)* (c. 215–254 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 17, page 7 Read it in the library ›

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POINT 5 OF 8

Breaking away from succession was a serious fault

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

Irenaeus warns believers to be careful of those who leave the original line and set up meetings on their own. He compares those who split the Church to Jeroboam, who divided Israel.

7

"But it is also necessary to be wary of others who depart from this original succession and gather themselves anywhere, viewing them as heretics with perverse minds, schismatics who are arrogant and self-serving, or as hypocrites acting for gain or vanity."

later in the same passage

"Those who divide and separate the unity of the Church will receive the same punishment from God as Jeroboam did."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 15, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 8

Ignatius ties the Church to its ministers

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

Ignatius tells believers to honor the bishop, presbyters and deacons, and says that without them there is no Church. He also tells the people to gather where the bishop is.

8

"In the same way, let everyone honor the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as the council of God, and assembly of the apostles. Without these, there is no Church."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Trallians* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 4, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

9

"Wherever the bishop is, there let the congregation also be; just as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 6, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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POINT 7 OF 8

There is one Church and one faith

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

Ignatius reasons from one God, one Spirit and one baptism to one Church and one faith. A bishop at a council in Carthage says the same, adding that baptism and holiness belong to that one Church.

10 “For if there is one God of the universe, the Father of Christ, "of whom are all things;" and one Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord, "by whom are all things;" and also one Holy Spirit, who worked in Moses, and in the prophets and apostles; and also one baptism, which is administered so that we should share in the death of the Lord; and also one chosen Church; there should likewise be but one faith in respect to Christ.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistles of Ignatius* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 7, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

11 “For not only is God one, but the faith is one, and the Church is one, in which the one baptism and holiness stand, along with the rest.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Seventh Council of Carthage* 1 (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 21, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 8 OF 8

Belonging also means doing God's will

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

An early sermon credited to Clement links being part of the true Church with obeying God. Outward order matters, but so does a faithful life.

12 “So then, brothers, if we do the will of God our Father, we will be members of the first church, the spiritual church, the one that was created before the sun and moon.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *Second Epistle* 14 (c. 88–99 AD) **Source 2, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not say what a believer should do if he cannot find a church that has both succession and faithful teaching.
- They do not speak about groups that began many centuries after the apostles.
- 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 32 early Christian passages and 214 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–32, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 33–82, in Bible order), then 164 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 *32 passages from 14 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · source 1*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 15 (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** “appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek, and not lovers of money, 1 Timothy 3:4 and truthful and proven… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome, *c. 88–99 AD · source 2*

2 *Second Epistle* 14 **Quote 12, page 5** do the will of God our Father, we will be members of the first church, the spiritual church, the one that was created before the sun and moon. But if… [continues online] **read ›**

Hermas, *c. 90–150 AD · source 3*

3 *Shepherd* (1885 English; on point 1) “square white stones which fitted exactly into each other, are apostles, bishops, teachers, and deacons, who have lived in godly purity, and have acted as bishops and teachers and deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 4–10*

4 *Epistle to the Trallians* (1885 English) **Quote 8, page 4** “like manner, let all reverence the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as… [continues online] **read ›**

5 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (on point 6) “deacons to the presbyters; the presbyters to the bishop… [continues online] **read ›**

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6 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* **Quote 9, page 4** "as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Epistles of Ignatius* **Quote 10, page 5** Mindful of your love and zeal in Christ, which you have shown towards us, we thought it appropriate to write to you, who display such a godly and spiritual love… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Epistles of Ignatius* (1885 English; on point 6) "deacons, to the presbyters; and ye, the people, to the presbyters and the deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Epistles of Ignatius* (1885 English; on point 6) "ye subject to the bishop, to the presbyters, and to the deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians* (on point 6) The more someone sees the bishop keeping silent, the more they should respect him. For we should receive anyone whom the Master of the house sends to be over His… [continues online] **read ›**

Polycarp, *c. 100–155 AD · sources 11–12*

11 *Epistle to the Philippians* (on point 4) forsaking the vanity of many and their false doctrines, let us return to the word which has been handed down to us from… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Epistle to the Philippians* (on point 1) not of men. They must not be slanderers, double-tongued… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 13–15*

13 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English; on point 2) "this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Against Heresies: Book I* (1885 English; on point 7) "the Catholic Church possesses one and the same faith throughout the whole world, as we have already said… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *Against Heresies: Book IV* **Quotes 5, 7, pages 3, 4** it is necessary to obey the presbyters in the Church—those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, along with the succession of the… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · source 16*

16 *On Prescription Against Heretics* 32 **Quotes 3, 4, pages 2, 3** "if there are any heresies bold enough to place themselves in the middle of the apostolic age, so that they may seem to have been handed down by the apostles… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · source 17*

17 *De Principiis (On First Principles)* (1885 English) **Quote 6, page 3** "seeing there are many who think they hold the opinions of Christ, and yet some of these think differently from their predecessors, yet as the teaching of the Church, transmitted… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 18–21*

18 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 7) "the Church, which is Catholic and one, is not cut nor divided, but is indeed connected and bound together by the cement of priests who cohere with one another… [continues online] **read ›**

19 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 7) "if the spouse of Christ is one, which is the Catholic Church, it is she herself who alone bears sons of God… [continues online] **read ›**

20 *Epistles* (on point 7) immersed by heretics should not be baptized when they come to us, because they say there is one baptism, which is one for this reason: the Church is one, and… [continues online] **read ›**

21 *Seventh Council of Carthage* 1 **Quote 11, page 5** "not only is God one, but the faith is one, and the Church is… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 22–24*

22 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 1) among us, you yourselves are not ignorant of them. For you certainly know that those named by us bishops, and presbyters, and deacons, were made so by prayer and by… [continues online] **read ›**

23 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 7) one consent teach those that are under you to be of the same sentiments and to be of the same opinions about the same matters, that there may be no… [continues online] **read ›**

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24 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) “If any bishop, or presbyter, or deacon, receives a second ordination from any one, let him be deprived, and the person who ordained him, unless he can show that his… [continues online] **read ›**

Lactantius, *c. 290–320 AD · sources 25–26*

25 *Divine Institutes* 30 (1885 English; on point 5) “however, because all the separate assemblies of heretics call themselves Christians in preference to others, and think that theirs is the Catholic Church, it must be known that the true… [continues online] **read ›**

26 *Divine Institutes* 30 (1885 English; on point 7) “it is the Catholic Church alone which retains true worship… [continues online] **read ›**

Alexander of Alexandria, *c. 313–328 AD · source 27*

27 *Epistles on the Arian Heresy* 1 (1885 English; on point 7) “Since the body of the Catholic Church is one, and it is commanded in Holy Scripture that we should keep the bond of unanimity and peace, it follows that we… [continues online] **read ›**

John Chrysostom, *c. 386–407 AD · sources 28–30*

28 *Homily on St. Ignatius* 1 (on point 1) And I will speak of a fourth crown, arising for us from this bishopric. What then is this? It is the fact that he was entrusted with our own native… [continues online] **read ›**

29 *Homilies on Philippians* (on point 1) when writing to Titus, he says, "For this cause I left you in Crete, that you should appoint elders in every city, as I gave you charge. If any man… [continues online] **read ›**

30 *Homilies on Titus* (1885 English; on point 1) “ordain elders in every city, here he is speaking of Bishops, as we have before said, as I had appointed you… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome · *sources 31–32*

31 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Quote 1, page 2** “Thus, preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits of… [continues online] **read ›**

32 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (on point 5) do we divide and tear to pieces the members of Christ, and raise up strife against our own… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *50 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

33 **Isaiah 60:17** And instead of bronze I will bring you gold, and instead of iron I will bring you silver, and instead of wood I will bring you bronze, and instead of stones, iron; and I will set your rulers in peace and your overseers in righteousness. **read ›**

34 **Susanna 1:34** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

35 **Matthew 16:18** And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I shall build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. **read ›**

36 **Mark 3:14** He appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them out to preach **read ›**

37 **Mark 16:16** He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who disbelieves will be condemned. **read ›**

38 **Acts 1:22** beginning with the baptism of John until the day he was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.” **read ›**

39 **Acts 2:2** Suddenly a sound came from heaven like a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. **read ›**

40 **Acts 3:2** A man lame from his mother’s womb was being carried. They laid him daily at the temple gate called Beautiful to ask alms from those entering the temple. **read ›**

41 **Acts 6:6** whom they set before the apostles. When they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. **read ›**

42 **Acts 9:14** Here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.” **read ›**

43 **Acts 14:23** They appointed elders for them in every church and, after prayer with fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. **read ›**

44 **Acts 15:22** Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: Judas called Barsabbas and Silas, leading men among the brothers. **read ›**

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45 **Acts 18:8** Crispus, the synagogue ruler, believed in the Lord with his whole household. Many of the Corinthians who heard believed and were baptized. **read ›**

46 **Acts 19:4** Paul said, “John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in the one who would come after him, that is, in Christ Jesus.” **read ›**

47 **Acts 26:4** All the Jews know my way of life from my youth, lived from the beginning among my own nation in Jerusalem. **read ›**

48 **Romans 6:3** Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **read ›**

49 **Romans 12:5** so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. **read ›**

50 **1 Corinthians 10:2** and were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; **read ›**

51 **1 Corinthians 12:12** For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of that one body, though many, are one body, so also is Christ. **read ›**

52 **1 Corinthians 12:13** For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all given drink to share in one Spirit. **read ›**

53 **1 Corinthians 12:27** Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. **read ›**

54 **1 Corinthians 12:28** God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, and kinds of tongues. **read ›**

55 **Galatians 3:23** But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, confined for the faith which should afterwards be revealed. **read ›**

56 **Galatians 3:27** For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. **read ›**

57 **Ephesians 2:20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, **read ›**

58 **Ephesians 3:10** so that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places, **read ›**

59 **Ephesians 4:4** There is one body and one Spirit, even as you also were called in one hope of your calling, **read ›**

60 **Ephesians 4:5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **read ›**

61 **Ephesians 4:11** He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, shepherds and teachers; **read ›**

62 **Ephesians 5:27** so that he might present the church to himself in glory, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and blameless. **read ›**

63 **Colossians 1:4** having heard of your faithfulness in Christ Jesus and your love toward all the saints, **read ›**

64 **Colossians 1:5** because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel **read ›**

65 **Colossians 1:23** if indeed you continue in faithfulness, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. **read ›**

66 **1 Timothy 1:11** according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, with which I was entrusted. **read ›**

67 **1 Timothy 2:7** for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie—a teacher of the Gentiles in faithfulness and truth. **read ›**

68 **1 Timothy 3:1** The saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a good work. **read ›**

69 **1 Timothy 3:8** Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for shameful gain, **read ›**

70 **1 Timothy 3:12** Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. **read ›**

71 **1 Timothy 3:13** For those who have served well gain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in faithfulness in Christ Jesus. **read ›**

72 **1 Timothy 3:15** but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct oneself in God’s house, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. **read ›**

73 **1 Timothy 4:14** Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the elders. **read ›**

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74 **1 Timothy 5:17** Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching. **read ›**

75 **2 Timothy 1:13** Hold to the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faithfulness and love in Christ Jesus. **read ›**

76 **2 Timothy 1:14** Guard the good thing entrusted to you through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. **read ›**

77 **Titus 1:3** but at his appointed times he manifested his word in the proclamation entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior, **read ›**

78 **Titus 1:5** I left you in Crete for this reason, that you would set in order the things that were lacking and appoint elders in every city, as I directed you— **read ›**

79 **1 Peter 1:5** who by the power of God are guarded through faithfulness for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. **read ›**

80 **1 Peter 3:21** Baptism, which corresponds to this, now also saves us—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but the appeal of a good conscience to God—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, **read ›**

81 **1 Peter 5:1** I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings, and a partaker of the glory to be revealed: **read ›**

82 **Jude 1:3** Beloved, while making every effort to write to you about the common salvation, I found it necessary to write and urge you to contend earnestly for the faith delivered once for all to the saints. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *164 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.

Genesis 3:7 · 3:15

Deuteronomy 1:31

1 Samuel 12:3 · 28:11 · 28:13 · 28:15

Psalms 50:3

Isaiah 42:5 · 43:21 · 51:6 · 53:2 · 63:3

Jeremiah 2:12 · 2:19 · 4:22 · 6:30 · 17:9 · 31:31

Daniel 12:4

Hosea 12:10

Jonah 2:5 · 2:10

Malachi 3:1

Matthew 2:20 · 5:3 · 5:6 · 5:8 · 5:17 · 5:18 · 5:37 · 5:44 · 6:8 · 6:13 · 7:2 · 7:9 · 8:24 · 10:5 · 11:25 · 11:27 · 12:26 · 12:42 · 15:13 · 18:6 · 19:16 · 20:28 · 22:29 · 23:2 · 24:2 · 24:25 · 25:27 · 25:41 · 26:24 · 26:41 · 27:51

Mark 1:2 · 1:13 · 7:8 · 7:9 · 9:42 · 10:43 · 12:24 · 14:38

Luke 6:38 · 10:16 · 10:18 · 10:21 · 10:22 · 11:21 · 11:23 · 11:31 · 11:50 · 12:42 · 12:47 · 12:50 · 17:1 · 17:2 · 18:18 · 19:13 · 19:43 · 22:32 · 23:43

John 1:6 · 1:18 · 3:5 · 4:3 · 5:28 · 7:38 · 8:56 · 9:2 · 9:6 · 9:7 · 11:44 · 12:13 · 12:24 · 15:16 · 20:20 · 20:22

Acts 1:8 · 8:9 · 9:5 · 10:28 · 15:20

Romans 1:17 · 6:7 · 7:24 · 13:14

1 Corinthians 1:10 · 5:11 · 6:9 · 6:10 · 9:25 · 12:26 · 14:33 · 15:6 · 15:11 · 15:20 · 15:42 · 15:46 · 15:47 · 15:52

2 Corinthians 8:18 · 11:2 · 11:29

Galatians 5:16 · 6:1 · 6:7

Ephesians 2:7 · 2:15 · 4:1 · 4:2 · 4:25 · 5:4 · 5:6 · 5:22

Philippians 1:18 · 1:27 · 2:2 · 3:16 · 4:8

Colossians 3:5

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1 Timothy 3:4
2 Timothy 2:12
Hebrews 1:3 · 3:5 · 6:6 · 13:17
James 1:17 · 4:1
1 Peter 2:5 · 2:11 · 4:7
1 John 1:1 · 2:22 · 2:27 · 4:2 · 4:3
2 John 1:7
Revelation 1:20 · 4:6 · 5:7 · 13:1 · 13:18 · 16:1

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

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Did the early church say a true church must trace its bishops back to the apostles?” on April 10, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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 above, 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.

How to cite this study. The Historic Faith, “Did the early church say a true church must trace its bishops back to the apostles?” Early Church Questions, published November 9, 2026, https://thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/did-the-early-church-say-a-true-church-must-trace-its-bishops-back-to-the. To cite one quotation, add its number and source, for example “quote 1, source 31.”

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