THE QUESTION

Did the early church teach respect for a young bishop?

Asked by a THF member on August 14, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 9 numbered quotations · the 8 early Christian passages and 24 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-teach-respect-for-a-young-bishop

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

Yes. In his letter to the Magnesians, Ignatius of Antioch told the church not to look down on their bishop because he was young, but to give him full respect, as wise elders did. He pointed to young servants of God like Daniel, Samuel and Timothy, and said the honor shown a bishop is really given to God.

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.

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POINT 1 OF 7

Do not slight a bishop for his youth

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

In the shorter form of his letter to the Magnesians, Ignatius warns the church against treating their bishop too casually because he is young. He says holy elders had already shown the right way by giving him full respect.

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

Look at his knowledge of God, not age

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

The longer form of the same letter makes the point plainly. Wise elders did not fix their eyes on how young their bishop looked, but on what he knew of God. Age alone does not make a person wise.

2

> "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

Source 1, page 5 Read it in the library ›

POINT 3 OF 7

God has often used the young

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

Ignatius lists young people in Scripture whom God filled and used, starting with Daniel at twelve. He concludes that youth devoted to God should not be despised, while a wicked person deserves no honor just for being old.

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3 “For Daniel the wise, at twelve years of age, was filled with the divine Spirit and exposed the elders, who in vain carried their grey hairs, as false accusers and lusting after another man’s wife's beauty.”

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 ›

POINT 4 OF 7

Timothy was a young leader too

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

Ignatius reminds the church that Timothy was young when Paul wrote to him. He quotes Paul's charge that no one should despise Timothy's youth, and that Timothy should be an example to believers.

4 “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 5 OF 7

Respect for the bishop goes to God

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

Ignatius says the elders submit not so much to the young man as to God the Father, whom he calls the bishop of all. To the Ephesians he writes that whoever the Master sends over His household should be received as one would receive the Master himself.

5 “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 ›

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6 “For we ought to receive everyone whom the Master of the house sends to be over His household, as we would receive Him who sent him.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 3, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 7

God honors those who honor the bishop

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

Writing to the Smyrnaeans, Ignatius links reverence for God with respect for the bishop. He says the one who honors the bishop is honored by God.

7 “It is good to reverence both God and the bishop. Whoever honors the bishop has been honored by God; whoever does anything without the knowledge of the bishop truly serves the devil.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 4, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 7 OF 7

Clement also urged respect for church leaders

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

Clement of Rome praises the Corinthians for obeying their leaders and honoring their elders. He urges the church to keep showing that respect. He does not speak of a bishop's age, but he shares the same call to honor those who lead.

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 8, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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9 “For you did all things without favoritism, and walked in the commandments of God, being obedient to those who led you, and giving all appropriate honor to the elders among you.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 7, 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 old Ignatius's young bishop was, or set a minimum age for bishops.
- Only Ignatius speaks directly about a young bishop here; the other writers speak of respect for leaders in general.
- 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 8 early Christian passages and 24 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages (sources 1–8, grouped by writer, earliest first), then 24 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 *8 passages from 2 writers*

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

1 *Epistle to the Magnesians* **Quotes 2, 3, 4, pages 2, 3** “the Christ-bearer was young, but hear what his teacher writes to… [continues online] **read ›**
2 *Epistle to the Magnesians* **Quotes 1, 5, pages 2, 3** “the Father, as I have seen even holy elders do. They do not judge hastily based on their bishop's youthful appearance, but being wise in God, they submit to… [continues online] **read ›**
3 *Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians* **Quote 6, page 4** “more, therefore, you see the bishop silent, the… [continues online] **read ›**
4 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 4** “is well to reverence both God and the bishop… [continues online] **read ›**
5 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (on point 6) God and the king.” And I say, indeed honor God as the Author and Lord of all things, but the bishop as the high-priest, who bears the image of… [continues online] **read ›**

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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 ›**

Clement of Rome · *sources 7–8*

7 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Quote 9, page 5** to those who led you, and giving all appropriate honor to the elders among you. You instructed young men to be of a sober and serious mind; you taught your… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English) **Quote 8, page 4** “us honour the aged among us; let us train up the young men in the fear of God… [continues online] **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *24 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 · 22:39 · 24:5

Mark 8:38

Luke 16:15 · 21:14

John 7:37 · 15:1 · 15:12 · 21:17

Acts 20:29

1 Corinthians 10:33 · 12:3

Galatians 1:10

Ephesians 4:27

1 Thessalonians 5:12

2 Thessalonians 3:6

1 Timothy 2:4 · 5:21

Hebrews 13:17

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 the early church teach respect for a young bishop?” on August 14, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY