THE QUESTION

How did early bishops and elders guard and contend for the faith?

Asked by a THF member on July 1, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 12 numbered quotations · the 42 early Christian passages and 270 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/how-did-early-bishops-and-elders-guard-and-contend-for-the-faith

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

Early writers say bishops and elders guarded the faith by holding to the teaching handed down openly from the apostles, teaching it, and answering false teachers. They were to watch over the flock like shepherds, live blameless lives as examples, and correct and heal straying members rather than crush them.

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 8

The apostles appointed proven leaders to continue

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 made them bishops and deacons. Knowing there would be strife over the office, they arranged for other approved men to follow them, so the work would go on in good order.

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

2 “For this reason, considering that they had obtained perfect foreknowledge of this, they appointed the ministers previously mentioned, and subsequently instructed that when these ministers passed away, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 40, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 8

Guarding the deposit means keeping public apostolic teaching

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

Tertullian explains Paul's charge to Timothy to guard what was entrusted to him. He says it is not a secret teaching but a warning to accept nothing beyond what Timothy heard openly from Paul.

3 “Rather, it gives a warning not to receive any doctrine other than what Timothy had heard from Paul himself, and, as I understand it, heard publicly: "before many witnesses," is the phrase he uses”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Prescription Against Heretics* 25 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 17, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

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POINT 3 OF 8

Overseers must watch for wolves

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

Irenaeus recalls Paul's farewell to the bishops and presbyters of Ephesus. Paul told them to guard themselves and the flock, because false teachers would come from outside and rise up from within.

4 “Be careful, then, both about yourselves and all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you bishops, to lead the Church of the Lord, which He has acquired for Himself through His own blood.””

later in the same passage

“I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come among you, not sparing the flock.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 13, page 7** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 8

Learn truth from the apostles' faithful successors

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

Irenaeus says believers should learn the truth from elders who stand in the line from the apostles and whose life and speech are sound. He notes that false teachers reject this handed-down teaching.

5 “Therefore, where the gifts of the Lord have been placed, we must learn the truth from those who possess the succession of the Church from the apostles, and among whom is found conduct that is sound and blameless, as well as speech that is unadulterated and incorrupt.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 12, page 7** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

6 “But, again, when we refer them to the tradition that originates from the apostles and is preserved through the succession of presbyters in the Churches, they object to tradition, claiming they are wiser not only than the presbyters but even than the apostles, because they have discovered the unadulterated truth.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 14, page 7** Read it in the library ›

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POINT 5 OF 8

A bishop must teach and answer opponents

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

Origen points out that Paul requires a bishop to be a teacher. He must be able to convince those who speak against the truth and stop the mouths of deceivers.

7 “He says that he ought to be able to convince the gainsayers, so that by the wisdom that is in him he may stop the mouths of foolish talkers and deceivers.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Against Celsus* 48 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 21, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 8

A blameless life protects the flock

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

The Didache asks for leaders who are gentle, honest and not greedy. The Apostolic Constitutions add that a bishop's own clean life draws his people to follow his example.

8 “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 2, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

9 “For if the shepherd is blameless regarding wickedness, he will compel his own disciples, and by his very way of life urge them to become worthy imitators of his actions.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 30, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

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POINT 7 OF 8

The bishop is a watchman who corrects gently

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

The bishop is called a watchman who must keep his people from sin. He is told to rebuke in order to restore, not to destroy, and to strengthen the weak in faith.

10 “A bishop must take care that his people do not sin, since he is appointed as a watchman among them.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** **Source 32, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
(c. 250–380 AD)
THF's updated English

11 “He must reprove, but not strike; bring them low so that they may be ashamed, but not ruin them; warn them so that they may be converted; and rebuke them so that they may be reformed and live better lives.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** **Source 28, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
(c. 250–380 AD)
THF's updated English

POINT 8 OF 8

Shepherds must seek and heal the lost

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

Cyprian says the chief duty of overseers is to feed and keep the sheep. Many shepherds feed one flock, and they must gather and heal the fallen with a father's care.

12 “What greater or more fitting duty do overseers have than to care, with careful concern and healing medicine, for the nourishing and keeping of the sheep?”

later in the same passage

“For although we are many shepherds, we feed one flock, and we ought to gather and cherish all the sheep whom Christ sought by His blood and passion.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** ***Epistles*** **Source 23, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
(c. 248–258 AD)
THF's updated English

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THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These writers mostly describe one bishop with presbyters and deacons, so they do not speak directly to a church led by a group of elders alone.
- They do not give a step-by-step method for handling every kind of false teaching.
- 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 42 early Christian passages and 270 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–42, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 43–199, in Bible order), then 113 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 *42 passages from 13 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · sources 1–2*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 4 (1885 English) “you shall honour him as the Lord… [continues online] **read ›**

2 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 15 (1885 English) **Quote 8, page 4** “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 ›**

Hermas, *c. 90–150 AD · sources 3–5*

3 *Shepherd* (on point 8) and if none of you has perished. But if He finds any of these sheep wandering away, woe to the shepherds! And if the shepherds themselves have wandered away, what… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Shepherd* (1885 English; on point 6) “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 ›**

5 *Shepherd* (1885 English; on point 6) “the bishops never failed to protect, by their service, the widows, and those who were in want, and always maintained a holy conversation… [continues online] **read ›**

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 6–10*

6 *Epistle to the Trallians* presbyters. But he who is outside does anything apart from the bishop, the presbyters, and the deacons, such a person is defiled in his conscience and is worse than an… [continues online] **read ›**

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7 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* them all: there is only one altar for the whole Church, and one bishop, with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow-servants. Since there is only one unbegotten Being, God… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* “deacons to the presbyters; the presbyters to the bishop… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Epistles of Ignatius* (1885 English; on point 2) “not lose what was committed to your trust… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Epistles of Ignatius* (on point 8) reveals who is to lead you. For "I am now ready to be offered," that I "may win Christ." Let the deacons understand the dignity of their position and strive… [continues online] **read ›**

Polycarp, *c. 100–155 AD · source 11*

11 *Epistle to the Philippians* (on point 6) “that "God is not mocked," we ought to live worthy of His commandment and glory. Similarly, the deacons should be blameless before His righteousness, as they are the servants of… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 12–14*

12 *Against Heresies: Book IV* (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 3** “Such presbyters does the Church nourish, of whom also the prophet says: “I will give thy rulers in peace, and thy bishops in righteousness.” Of whom also did the Lord… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Against Heresies: Book III* **Quote 4, page 3** “who worked with him, but also to those who listened to him, as he himself demonstrates. When the bishops and presbyters came from Ephesus and the nearby cities and gathered… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English) **Quote 6, page 3** “But, again, when we refer them to that tradition which originates from the apostles, [and] which is preserved by means of the succession of presbyters in the Churches, they object… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · source 15*

15 *Stromata* 4.17 (1885 English) “us therefore respect those who are over us, and reverence the elders… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 16–19*

16 *Apology* 39 (1885 English; on point 6) “tried men of our elders preside over us, obtaining that honour not by purchase, but by established character… [continues online] **read ›**

17 *On Prescription Against Heretics* 25 (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 2** “Timothy 6:20 and again: That good thing which was committed unto you keep… [continues online] **read ›**

18 *De Fuga in Persecutione* 11 (on point 8) has made some upward step. But when those in authority themselves—I mean deacons, presbyters, and bishops—run away, how will a layman be able to understand for what purpose… [continues online] **read ›**

19 *Against Marcion* 5 (on point 2) then this too will certainly be quite clear: what has been kept as a sacred deposit in the churches of the apostles has come down from the apostles. Let us… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 20–21*

20 *Commentary on Matthew* 14 (1885 English; on point 6) “any one is blameless, the husband of one wife, having children, that believe Titus 1:5-6 — of course — and so on… [continues online] **read ›**

21 *Against Celsus* 48 (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 4** “then can Celsus justly charge us with saying, Let no one come to us who is 'instructed,' or 'wise,' or 'prudent?' Nay, let him who wills come to us instructed… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 22–27*

22 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 8) “moreover, it devolves upon us who appear to be placed on high, in the place of a shepherd, to keep watch over the flock… [continues online] **read ›**

23 *Epistles* **Quote 12, page 5** “greater or more fitting duty do overseers have than to care, with careful concern and healing medicine, for the nourishing and keeping of the sheep? For the Lord speaks and… [continues online] **read ›**

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24 *Epistles* (on point 4) to you to be a bishop who, after a bishop had been appointed in the Church by sixteen fellow bishops, strives through bribery to be made a corrupt and outsider… [continues online] **read ›**

25 *Epistles* “But deacons ought to remember that the Lord chose apostles, that is, bishops and overseers… [continues online] **read ›**

26 *Epistles* (on point 7) “it is the duty of those placed over them to keep the… [continues online] **read ›**

27 *Epistles* (on point 4) 10:30. Bringing His Church into that unity, He says again, "And there shall be one flock and one shepherd," John 10:16. But if the flock is one, how… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 28–36*

28 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 11, page 5** “for a good shepherd, let the lay person honor him, love him, and respect him as his lord, as his master, as the high priest of God, and as a… [continues online] **read ›**

29 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 7) sin. So labor with all your strength to be blameless, and be watchful over every part of your flock, lest anyone be scandalized because of you and so perish. For… [continues online] **read ›**

30 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 9, page 4** “4:9. For our Lord and Teacher Jesus Christ, the Son of… [continues online] **read ›**

31 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 1) 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 the laying on… [continues online] **read ›**

32 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 10, page 5** “A bishop must take care that his people do not… [continues online] **read ›**

33 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 6) have already said, that a bishop, a presbyter, and a deacon, when they are constituted, must be but once married, whether their wives be alive or whether they be dead… [continues online] **read ›**

34 *Apostolic Constitutions* this, you bishops; and hear this, you of the laity, how God speaks: "I will judge between ram and ram, and between sheep and sheep." And He says to the… [continues online] **read ›**

35 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 1) “the testimony of two or three witnesses is more firm and secure… [continues online] **read ›**

36 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 6) a one a bishop ought to be, who has been the husband of one wife… [continues online] **read ›**

Peter of Alexandria, *c. 300–311 AD · source 37*

37 *Canonical Epistle* think carefully about what this great father and holy martyr sets forth here, those who say that bishops may give up their Sees and still keep the dignity of the… [continues online] **read ›**

Anonymous · *source 38*

38 *Treatise Against the Heretic Novatian* 1 (on point 3) intent to destroy the flock of Christ? As we read in Zechariah: “Look, I am raising up a shepherd in the land who will not care for what has gone… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome · *sources 39–42*

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

40 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Quote 2, page 2** “from the episcopate those who have fulfilled its duties blamelessly and holily. Blessed are those presbyters who, having completed their journey before now, have achieved a fruitful and perfect departure… [continues online] **read ›**

41 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English) “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 ›**

42 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English) “us reverence the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was given for us… [continues online] **read ›**

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THE BIBLE *157 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

43 **Exodus 4:29** Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered the elders of the children of Israel. **read ›**

44 **Exodus 19:7** So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words which God had commanded them. **read ›**

45 **Exodus 24:14** And they said to the elders, “Stay quietly here until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; if anyone has a case to be judged, let him go to them.” **read ›**

46 **Leviticus 19:32** You shall rise up before the gray-haired and honor the face of the elder, and you shall fear your God. I am the Lord your God. **read ›**

47 **Numbers 11:16** Then the Lord said to Moses, “Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you yourself know to be elders of the people and their scribes; and bring them to the tabernacle of witness, and they shall stand there with you. **read ›**

48 **Numbers 11:24** So Moses went out and spoke the words of the Lord to the people; and he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and set them all around the tabernacle. **read ›**

49 **Numbers 27:17** who shall go out before them and who shall come in before them, who shall lead them out and who shall bring them in, so that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep that have no shepherd.” **read ›**

50 **Numbers 32:28** So Moses appointed over them Eleazar the priest, Jesus the son of Nun, and the leaders of the families of the tribes of Israel. **read ›**

51 **Deuteronomy 17:6** On the word of two witnesses or of three witnesses he shall die; the one who is to die shall not die on the word of one witness. **read ›**

52 **Deuteronomy 17:7** The hand of the witnesses shall be upon him first to put him to death, and afterward the hand of the people. So you shall remove the evil person from among yourselves. **read ›**

53 **Deuteronomy 19:15** One witness shall not stand to testify against a man for any unrighteousness, or for any offense, or for any sin that he commits. At the mouth of two witnesses or at the mouth of three witnesses every word shall stand. **read ›**

54 **Deuteronomy 19:16** And if an unjust witness rises up against a man, accusing him of ungodliness, **read ›**

55 **Deuteronomy 19:18** The judges shall inquire diligently; and behold, if the witness is an unjust witness who has testified unjustly, and has risen up against his brother, **read ›**

56 **Deuteronomy 21:2** your elders and your judges shall go out and measure the distance to the cities all around the slain man. **read ›**

57 **Deuteronomy 32:7** Remember the days of old; consider the years of generation upon generation. Ask your father, and he will declare it to you; your elders, and they will tell you. **read ›**

58 **2 Samuel 22:24** I shall be blameless before him, and I will keep myself from my iniquity. **read ›**

59 **1 Kings 2:9** But you shall by no means hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man and will know what you ought to do to him; and you shall bring his gray hair down with blood to Hades.” **read ›**

60 **1 Kings 20:10** The son of Ader sent to him, saying, “So may God do to me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria is enough for the foxes, for all the people, my foot soldiers.” (Septuagint 3 Kingdoms 21:10 (1 Kings 20:10 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

61 **1 Chronicles 27:31** And over the sheep was Jaziz the Hagrite. All these were overseers of the possessions of King David. **read ›**

62 **1 Chronicles 28:8** Now therefore, in the sight of all the assembly of the Lord and in the hearing of our God, keep and seek all the commandments of the Lord our God, so that you may inherit the good land and leave it as an inheritance to your sons after you forever. **read ›**

63 **2 Chronicles 35:2** He set the priests in their charges and strengthened them for the works of the house of the Lord. **read ›**

64 **Ezra 1:2** “Thus says Cyrus king of the Persians: The Lord God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he himself has charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judea. **read ›**

65 **Ezra 7:2** the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, **read ›**

66 **Ezra 9:4** Then everyone who followed the word of the God of Israel gathered to me because of the faithlessness of the exiles; and I sat still in silence until the evening sacrifice. **read ›**

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67 **Psalms 105:22** to discipline his rulers as himself, and to teach his elders wisdom. (Septuagint Psalm 104:22 (Psalm 105:22 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

68 **Proverbs 5:19** Let your loving deer and your graceful colt keep company with you, and let your own lead you and be with you at all times; for, carried along in her love, you will be greatly increased. **read ›**

69 **Ecclesiastes 3:22** And I saw that there is no good except that a man should be glad in his works, for that is his portion; for who will bring him to see what will be after him? **read ›**

70 **Isaiah 5:4** What more shall I do for my vineyard that I have not done for it? For I waited for it to produce grapes, but it produced thorns. **read ›**

71 **Isaiah 9:15** the old man and those who show partiality—this is the head; and the prophet who teaches lawless things—he is the tail. (Septuagint Isaiah 9:14 (Isaiah 9:15 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

72 **Isaiah 15:3** Wrap yourselves in sackcloth in her squares, and lament on her rooftops and in her lanes; all of you, wail with weeping. **read ›**

73 **Jeremiah 14:2** Judea has mourned, and her gates have been emptied, and they are darkened on the ground, and the cry of Jerusalem has gone up. **read ›**

74 **Jeremiah 17:24** And it shall be, if you listen to me, says the Lord, by not bringing in burdens through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, and by sanctifying the Sabbath day so as to do no work, **read ›**

75 **Jeremiah 23:2** Therefore thus says the Lord against those who shepherd my people: You have scattered my sheep and driven them out, and you have not cared for them; behold, I will take vengeance on you according to your evil practices. **read ›**

76 **Jeremiah 23:4** And I will raise up shepherds for them, who will shepherd them; and they will no longer fear or be dismayed, says the Lord. **read ›**

77 **Jeremiah 33:8** And I will cleanse them from all their unrighteous deeds by which they sinned against me, and I will never remember their sins by which they sinned against me and turned away from me. (Septuagint Jeremiah 40:8 (Jeremiah 33:8 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

78 **Ezekiel 4:17** so that they may lack bread and water; and a man and his brother shall be ruined, and they shall waste away in their unrighteous deeds. **read ›**

79 **Ezekiel 22:30** And I sought from among them a man who walked uprightly and stood before me wholly in the time of anger, so that I should not utterly blot her out; and I found none. **read ›**

80 **Ezekiel 24:2** Son of man, write down for yourself a day, from this day on which the king of Babylon leaned against Jerusalem, from this very day. **read ›**

81 **Ezekiel 34:2** Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: O shepherds of Israel, do shepherds feed themselves? Do not the shepherds feed the sheep? **read ›**

82 **Daniel 2:8** And the king answered and said, “I know for certain that you are buying time, because you see that the matter has gone from me. **read ›**

83 **Daniel 2:11** For the thing that the king asks is difficult, and there is no one else who can declare it before the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with any flesh.” **read ›**

84 **Daniel 11:5** And the king of the south shall grow strong; and one of their rulers shall grow strong against him and shall rule with great dominion. **read ›**

85 **Amos 3:14** For in the day when I avenge the ungodly deeds of Israel upon him, I will also take vengeance on the altars of Bethel; and the horns of the altar shall be broken off, and they shall fall to the ground. **read ›**

86 **Amos 5:19** It is as if a man should flee from the face of a lion, and a bear meet him; and he should rush into his house and lean his hands on the wall, and a serpent bite him. **read ›**

87 **Amos 8:10** and I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lament; and I will bring up sackcloth on every waist, and baldness on every head; and I will make him like the mourning for a beloved one, and those with him like a day of anguish. **read ›**

88 **1 Esdras 1:2** having set the priests in their robes by their daily courses in the temple of the Lord. **read ›**

89 **1 Esdras 5:40** And Nehemiah and Attharias told them not to share in the holy things until a high priest should arise clothed with the Manifestation and the Truth. **read ›**

90 **1 Esdras 7:2** supervised the holy works very carefully, working together with the elders of the Jews and the temple officials. **read ›**

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91 **1 Esdras 8:46** commanding them to speak to Loddaeus and his brothers and the treasurers at that place, to send us men to serve as priests in the house of our Lord. **read ›**

92 **1 Esdras 8:59** Keep watch and guard them until you deliver them to the chiefs of the priests and the Levites and to the leaders of the families of Israel in Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of our God." **read ›**

93 **1 Esdras 9:4** and that whoever did not come within two or three days, according to the judgment of the ruling elders, should have his cattle given over to the temple, and he himself should be cut off from the multitude of the captivity. **read ›**

94 **Wisdom of Solomon 3:14** And blessed is the eunuch who has done no lawless deed with his hand, nor devised evil things against the Lord; for to him will be given the choice grace of faith, and a more delightful lot in the temple of the Lord. **read ›**

95 **Wisdom of Solomon 4:16** The righteous man who has died will condemn the ungodly who are living, and youth quickly made perfect will condemn the many years of the unrighteous man's old age. **read ›**

96 **Wisdom of Solomon 5:19** he will take holiness as an invincible shield, **read ›**

97 **Wisdom of Solomon 6:10** For those who keep holy things in holiness will be made holy, and those who have been taught them will find a defense. **read ›**

98 **Wisdom of Solomon 8:10** Because of her I shall have glory among the multitudes, and honor with the elders, though I am young. **read ›**

99 **Wisdom of Solomon 10:12** She guarded him from enemies, and kept him safe from those who lay in wait; and in a hard contest she awarded him the prize, that he might know that godliness is stronger than all. **read ›**

100 **Wisdom of Solomon 18:6** That night was made known beforehand to our fathers, so that, knowing surely the oaths in which they had believed, they might take heart. **read ›**

101 **Wisdom of Sirach 3:2** For the Lord has glorified the father over the children, and has established the judgment of the mother over the sons. **read ›**

102 **Wisdom of Sirach 3:8** Honor your father in deed and word, that a blessing may come upon you from him. **read ›**

103 **Wisdom of Sirach 8:6** Do not dishonor a man in his old age, for some of us also grow old. **read ›**

104 **Wisdom of Sirach 8:9** Do not miss the talk of the elders, for they themselves learned from their fathers; because from them you will learn understanding, and how to give an answer in time of need. **read ›**

105 **Wisdom of Sirach 10:20** Among brothers their leader is honored, and those who fear the Lord in his eyes. **read ›**

106 **Wisdom of Sirach 10:24** The great man and the judge and the ruler will be glorified, but none of them is greater than the one who fears the Lord. **read ›**

107 **Wisdom of Sirach 14:2** Blessed is he whose soul has not condemned him, and who has not fallen from his hope. **read ›**

108 **Wisdom of Sirach 25:4** How beautiful is judgment in gray hairs, and for elders to know counsel! **read ›**

109 **Wisdom of Sirach 25:5** How beautiful is the wisdom of old men, and thought and counsel in men of honor! **read ›**

110 **Wisdom of Sirach 25:6** Much experience is the crown of old men, and their boast is the fear of the Lord. **read ›**

111 **Wisdom of Sirach 34:8** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

112 **Wisdom of Sirach 42:1** Do not be ashamed of these things, and do not show partiality so as to sin: **read ›**

113 **Wisdom of Sirach 43:10** At the words of the Holy One they will stand in their appointed order, and they will never grow faint in their watches. **read ›**

114 **Susanna 1:5** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

115 **Susanna 1:16** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

116 **Susanna 1:21** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

117 **Susanna 1:24** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

118 **Susanna 1:28** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

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

120 **Susanna 1:50** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

121 **Susanna 1:61** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

122 **1 Maccabees 2:51** Remember the deeds of our fathers that they did in their generations, and receive great glory and an everlasting name. **read ›**

123 **1 Maccabees 4:42** He chose unblemished priests, devoted to the law; **read ›**

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124 **1 Maccabees 5:19** And he commanded them, saying, “Take charge of this people, and do not join battle with the nations until we return.” **read ›**

125 **1 Maccabees 12:34** for he had heard that they intended to hand over the stronghold to the men of Demetrius; and he stationed a garrison there to guard it. **read ›**

126 **1 Maccabees 14:38** And King Demetrius confirmed him in the high priesthood accordingly, **read ›**

127 **2 Maccabees 3:22** So they called upon God Almighty to keep the things entrusted safe and secure for those who had entrusted them. **read ›**

128 **2 Maccabees 6:23** But he made a noble decision, worthy of his years, of the dignity of his old age, of the gray hairs he had gained with distinction, of his excellent upbringing from childhood, and still more of the holy law made by God; and he answered accordingly, telling them to send him on to Hades at once. **read ›**

129 **2 Maccabees 12:45** And then, looking to the most splendid reward laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness—a holy and godly thought—he therefore made atonement for the dead, that they might be released from their sin. **read ›**

130 **4 Maccabees 5:4** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

131 **4 Maccabees 15:3** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

132 **4 Maccabees 15:32** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

133 **1 Enoch 5:8** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

134 **1 Enoch 69:25** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

135 **1 Enoch 89:19** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

136 **1 Enoch 89:22** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

137 **1 Enoch 89:29** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

138 **1 Enoch 89:30** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

139 **1 Enoch 89:36** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

140 **1 Enoch 89:49** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

141 **1 Enoch 89:53** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

142 **1 Enoch 89:59** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

143 **1 Enoch 89:65** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

144 **1 Enoch 89:68** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

145 **1 Enoch 90:1** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

146 **1 Enoch 90:2** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

147 **1 Enoch 90:22** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

148 **1 Enoch 100:5** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

149 **Matthew 18:16** But if he does not listen, take one or two more with you, so that at the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand. **read ›**

150 **Matthew 26:60** but they found none. Though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. **read ›**

151 **Luke 11:4** And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’” **read ›**

152 **John 1:6** There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. **read ›**

153 **John 8:17** It is also written in your Law that the testimony of two people is true. **read ›**

154 **Acts 6:3** Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this work. **read ›**

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

156 **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 ›**

157 **Acts 15:6** The apostles and the elders were gathered together to see about this matter. **read ›**

158 **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 ›**

159 **Acts 16:4** As they passed through the cities, they delivered the decrees decided by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for them to observe. **read ›**

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160 **Acts 20:17** From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and summoned the elders of the church. **read ›**

161 **Acts 20:28** Therefore pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock among whom the Holy Spirit has made you bishops, to shepherd the church of the Lord and God, which he purchased with his own blood. **read ›**

162 **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 ›**

163 **Romans 3:15** their feet are swift to shed blood; **read ›**

164 **1 Corinthians 15:2** by which also you are saved, if you hold firmly the word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. **read ›**

165 **2 Corinthians 5:12** For we are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an occasion to boast on our behalf, so that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. **read ›**

166 **2 Corinthians 13:1** This is the third time I am coming to you. At the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established. **read ›**

167 **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 ›**

168 **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 ›**

169 **Colossians 1:16** For by him all things were created in the heavens and on the earth, visible things and invisible things, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things have been created through him and for him. **read ›**

170 **Colossians 1:21** And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind through evil deeds, he has now reconciled **read ›**

171 **Colossians 1:24** Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and in my flesh I fill up what is lacking in the troubles of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the church. **read ›**

172 **Colossians 1:28** We proclaim him, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus; **read ›**

173 **1 Timothy 1:11** according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, with which I was entrusted. **read ›**

174 **1 Timothy 3:1** The saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a good work. **read ›**

175 **1 Timothy 3:2** The bishop therefore must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, orderly, hospitable, able to teach; **read ›**

176 **1 Timothy 3:8** Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for shameful gain, **read ›**

177 **1 Timothy 3:10** Let them also first be tested; then let them serve if they are blameless. **read ›**

178 **1 Timothy 3:12** Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. **read ›**

179 **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 ›**

180 **1 Timothy 5:1** Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father; the younger men as brothers; **read ›**

181 **1 Timothy 5:7** Also command these things, that they may be without reproach. **read ›**

182 **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 ›**

183 **1 Timothy 5:19** Do not receive an accusation against an elder except at the word of two or three witnesses. **read ›**

184 **1 Timothy 6:1** Let all who are slaves under a yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the doctrine may not be blasphemed. **read ›**

185 **1 Timothy 6:14** that you keep the commandment without spot, blameless until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, **read ›**

186 **1 Timothy 6:20** O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, turning away from profane empty talk and the contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, **read ›**

187 **2 Timothy 1:14** Guard the good thing entrusted to you through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. **read ›**

188 **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 ›**

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189 **Titus 1:6** provided a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, with faithful children who are not accused of reckless living and are not insubordinate. **read ›**

190 **Titus 1:7** For a bishop must be blameless as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for dishonest gain, **read ›**

191 **Hebrews 2:3** how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? It was first spoken through the Lord and confirmed to us by those who heard, **read ›**

192 **Hebrews 13:17** Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they watch on behalf of your souls, as those who will give account, that they may do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be unprofitable for you. **read ›**

193 **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 ›**

194 **1 Peter 2:17** Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. **read ›**

195 **1 Peter 2:25** For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. **read ›**

196 **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 ›**

197 **1 Peter 5:2** shepherd the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion, but voluntarily; not for dishonest gain, but willingly; **read ›**

198 **1 Peter 5:3** not as lording it over those entrusted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock. **read ›**

199 **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 *113 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 23:14 · 32:32

Leviticus 19:15

Proverbs 22:6 · 31:20

Song of Solomon 2:16

Isaiah 1:15 · 1:17 · 60:17 · 63:3 · 66:2

Jeremiah 1:5

Matthew 5:6 · 5:9 · 5:19 · 9:2 · 9:12 · 9:13 · 10:5 · 10:19 · 13:27 · 16:26 · 18:3 · 18:10 · 18:12 · 19:14 · 20:25 · 20:28 · 22:39 · 24:5

Mark 5:34 · 7:9 · 8:38 · 9:50 · 10:43 · 12:29

Luke 5:20 · 6:30 · 8:18 · 10:16 · 11:23 · 12:47 · 12:48 · 12:50 · 14:11 · 15:4 · 16:15 · 19:10 · 21:14

John 4:27 · 7:37 · 10:11 · 10:12 · 15:1 · 15:12 · 20:22 · 21:17

Acts 1:8 · 4:32 · 9:5 · 20:29

Romans 15:27

1 Corinthians 1:26 · 6:9 · 6:10 · 9:25 · 10:33 · 12:3 · 14:33 · 15:6 · 16:22

Galatians 1:10 · 3:27 · 5:16 · 6:1 · 6:7

Ephesians 2:20 · 4:2 · 4:11 · 4:27 · 6:4 · 6:5 · 6:9

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

Colossians 3:22 · 4:1

1 Thessalonians 5:12

2 Thessalonians 3:6

1 Timothy 1:18 · 2:4 · 3:4 · 3:6 · 5:9 · 5:21 · 6:13

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2 Timothy 2:2 · 2:12 · 4:6
Titus 1:9
Hebrews 6:6 · 13:7
James 5:16
1 Peter 2:5 · 2:11
1 John 2:27
Revelation 2:5 · 22:18

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

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “How did early bishops and elders guard and contend for the faith?” on July 1, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY