THE QUESTION

How did early bishops and elders organize the church, and what were their duties?

Asked by a THF member on June 3, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 12 numbered quotations · the 40 early Christian passages and 176 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-organize-the-church-and-what-were-their

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

The early writers describe bishops, presbyters and deacons appointed from the apostles' time, each with a set place. The bishop led worship, baptism and discipline. Presbyters served as his council, and deacons served both. Leaders were chosen before the people, shepherded the weak, cared for widows and the poor, and guarded the faith.

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 bishops and deacons

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

Clement of Rome says the apostles, sent by Christ, preached in cities and countries. They tested their first converts by the Spirit and appointed them as bishops and deacons for later believers.

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

POINT 2 OF 8

Leaders were chosen openly before the people

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

Cyprian says a priest should be chosen in front of everyone and approved by public testimony. The Didache asks churches to appoint gentle, truthful and proven men who are not lovers of money.

2 "We also see that this comes from divine authority: a priest should be chosen in the presence of the people, under the eyes of all, and should be approved as worthy and suitable by public judgment and testimony."

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

3 "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

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POINT 3 OF 8

Bishop, council of presbyters, and serving deacons

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

Ignatius describes three roles. The bishop holds chief authority, the presbyters are his counselors and advisers, and the deacons carry out a pure ministry to him. He says that without these there is no Church.

4 “And what is the presbytery but a sacred assembly, the counselors and advisers of the bishop?”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Trallians* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 5, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

5 “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 6, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 8

Worship and baptism ran through the bishop

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

Ignatius says the Eucharist, baptism and the love-feast were not to happen without the bishop or someone he entrusted. Tertullian adds that presbyters and deacons baptize under the bishop's authority, for the sake of peace.

6 “Let no one do anything related to the Church without the bishop. Consider that to be a proper Eucharist which is administered by the bishop or by someone he has entrusted it to.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 10, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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7 “As for giving it, the chief priest, that is, the bishop, has the right. Next come the presbyters and deacons, but not without the bishop's authority.”

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

POINT 5 OF 8

The bishop shepherds, corrects and restores

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

The Apostolic Constitutions picture the bishop as a loving shepherd. He warns and rebukes so people may be reformed, not ruined, and he strengthens the weak and binds up those wounded by sin.

8 “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** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 29, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 8

Bishops cared for widows and the needy

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

Hermas praises bishops who gladly welcomed God's servants into their homes. Through their service they never stopped caring for widows and the poor.

9 “And the bishops never failed, through their service, to care for widows and those who were in need, and they always lived in a holy way.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Hermas,** *Shepherd* (c. 90–150 AD) **Source 3, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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POINT 7 OF 8

Each order stays within its own rank

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

The Apostolic Constitutions say each person must keep the rank given to him and not take honors never given. Ordination belonged to the bishop, who laid hands on a deacon before the presbyters.

10 “Now this is what we all together charge you: let each one remain in the rank appointed to him, and do not go beyond his proper bounds. For these are not ours, but God's.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 27, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

11 “Concerning the ordination of deacons, I, Philip, make this constitution: O bishop, you shall ordain a deacon by laying your hands on him in the presence of the whole presbytery and the deacons, and you shall pray and say”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 34, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 8 OF 8

Faithful presbyters keep and explain the faith

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

Irenaeus says we learn the truth from those who hold the succession from the apostles. He describes them as blameless in life and sound in speech, explaining the Scriptures without danger.

12 “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 13, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

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THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages come from different times and places, so not every detail was practiced the same way in every church.
- They say little about how elders divided daily work among themselves.
- 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 40 early Christian passages and 176 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–40, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 41–155, in Bible order), then 61 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 *40 passages from 13 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · source 1*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 15 (1885 English) **Quote 3, 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 ›**

Hermas, *c. 90–150 AD · sources 2–3*

2 *Shepherd* (on point 3) “the stones in the building. Those square white stones that fit exactly together are apostles, bishops, teachers, and deacons. They have lived in godly purity, and they have served as… [continues online] **read ›**

3 *Shepherd* (1885 English) **Quote 9, page 4** “from the tenth mountain, where were trees which overshadowed certain sheep, they who believed were the following: bishops given to hospitality, who always gladly received into their houses the servants… [continues online] **read ›**

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 4–12*

4 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (on point 3) 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 ›**

5 *Epistle to the Trallians* (1885 English) **Quote 4, page 3** “what is the presbytery but a sacred assembly, the counsellors and assessors of the bishop… [continues online] **read ›**

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6 *Epistle to the Trallians* (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 3** "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 ›**

7 *Epistles of Ignatius* (1885 English; on point 3) "deacons, to the presbyters; and ye, the people, to the presbyters and the deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (on point 3) "deacons to the presbyters; the presbyters to the bishop… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (on point 4) that you all follow the bishop, just as Christ Jesus does the Father, and the presbytery as you would the apostles. Also, show reverence to the deacons, as those who… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* **Quote 6, page 3** 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 ›**

11 *Epistles of Ignatius* (1885 English; on point 3) "presbyters, "feed the flock which is among you," till God shall show who is to hold the rule over you… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Epistle to the Magnesians* 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… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 13–14*

13 *Against Heresies: Book IV* (1885 English) **Quote 12, page 5** "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 ›**

14 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English; on point 5) "heed, therefore, both to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has placed you as bishops, to rule the Church of the Lord, which He has… [continues online] **read ›**

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

15 *Instructor* 1.6 (1885 English; on point 5) "if we who preside over the Churches are shepherds after the image of the good Shepherd, and you the sheep, are we not to regard the Lord as preserving consistency… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 16–17*

16 *De Fuga in Persecutione* 11 (on point 5) speak out against them with similar threats, not only because they wickedly eat the sheep—they feed themselves rather than those committed to their care—but also because they scatter… [continues online] **read ›**

17 *On Baptism* 17 (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 4** "giving it, the chief priest (who is the bishop) has the right: in the next place, the presbyters and deacons, yet not without the bishop's authority, on account of… [continues online] **read ›**

Early Liturgies, *c. 200–400 AD · source 18*

18 *Divine Liturgy of St. Mark* 1 "entrusted to their care, and rightly dispense the word of truth, together with all the orthodox bishops, elders, deacons, sub-deacons, readers, singers, and the whole body of the holy… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · source 19*

19 *Commentary on Matthew* 14 "of the sacraments, to enter a second marriage. For when he lays down the rule about bishops in the First Epistle to Timothy, he says, "If a man seeks the… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 20–26*

20 *Epistles* (on point 3) be loosed in heaven." From there, through the changes of times and successions, the ordering of bishops and the arrangement of the Church continues on. So the Church is founded… [continues online] **read ›**

21 *Epistles* **Quote 2, page 2** a priest be appointed in the presence of all the assembly. That is, He teaches and shows that the ordination of priests should not be carried out except with the… [continues online] **read ›**

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22 *Epistles* (on point 2) 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 ›**

23 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 5) “so the shepherd might be restored to feed his flock, and the pilot to manage the ship, and the ruler to govern the people… [continues online] **read ›**

24 *Epistles* (1885 English) “certainly behooves those over whom we are placed not to run about nor to break up the harmonious agreement of the bishops with their crafty and deceitful rashness, but there… [continues online] **read ›**

25 *Epistles* (on point 3) “But deacons ought to remember that the Lord chose apostles, that is, bishops and overseers… [continues online] **read ›**

26 *Epistles* (on point 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 ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 27–35*

27 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 10, page 5** 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 ›**

28 *Apostolic Constitutions* are like the captain of a great ship, arrange the meetings with all possible skill. Instruct the deacons, like sailors, to prepare places for the brothers as for passengers, with… [continues online] **read ›**

29 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 8, page 4** “them sound to the Church. Feed the flock, not with insolence and contempt, as lording it over them, Ezekiel 34:4 but as a gentle shepherd, gathering the lambs into… [continues online] **read ›**

30 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) 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 ›**

31 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 7) He lays on hands, ordains, offers, and receives the blessing from bishops, but never from presbyters. A bishop removes from office any clergyman who deserves removal, except a bishop, because… [continues online] **read ›**

32 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 5) 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 ›**

33 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 7) “A presbyter by one bishop, as also a deacon, and the rest of the clergy” **read ›**

34 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) **Quote 11, page 5** “Concerning the ordination of deacons, I Philip make this constitution: You shall ordain a deacon, O bishop, by laying your hands upon him in the presence of the whole presbytery… [continues online] **read ›**

35 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) 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 36*

36 *Canonical Epistle* (on point 5) “is deprived of both, then how can he who has given up the episcopate, and refuses any longer to feed the flock entrusted to him, and despises the care of… [continues online] **read ›**

Anonymous · *sources 37–38*

37 *Treatise on Re-Baptism* 1 (on point 4) do you think, my brother? If a man is not baptized by a bishop in such a way as to receive the laying on of hands at once, and yet… [continues online] **read ›**

38 *Treatise on Re-Baptism* 1 (on point 4) but, as it were, whole and complete. For when the Holy Spirit is given to each believer by the laying on of the bishop’s hands, as happened with the… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome · *sources 39–40*

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* (on point 1) Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be conflict regarding the office of the episcopate. For this reason, considering that they had obtained perfect foreknowledge… [continues online] **read ›**

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THE BIBLE *115 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

41 **Genesis 46:32** The men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of cattle, and they have brought their cattle and their oxen and all that they have.’ **read ›**

42 **Genesis 48:14** But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands. **read ›**

43 **Exodus 29:10** You shall bring the calf to the doors of the tabernacle of witness, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the calf before the Lord, by the doors of the tabernacle of witness. **read ›**

44 **Exodus 29:30** The priest from among his sons who succeeds him, who goes into the tabernacle of witness to minister in the holy place, shall put them on for seven days. **read ›**

45 **Leviticus 3:2** He shall lay his hands on the head of the gift and slaughter it before the Lord by the doors of the tabernacle of witness; and the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall pour the blood on the altar of whole burnt offerings all around. **read ›**

46 **Leviticus 4:15** The elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the calf before the Lord, and they shall slaughter the calf before the Lord. **read ›**

47 **Leviticus 8:22** He slaughtered it, and Moses took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron’s right ear, on the tip of his right hand, and on the tip of his right foot. **read ›**

48 **Leviticus 14:15** Then the priest shall take some of the cup of oil and pour it into the priest’s own left hand. **read ›**

49 **Leviticus 14:26** The priest shall pour some of the oil into the priest’s own left hand, **read ›**

50 **Leviticus 14:27** and with his right finger the priest shall sprinkle some of the oil that is in his left hand seven times before the Lord. **read ›**

51 **Leviticus 16:32** The priest whom they anoint, and whose hands they consecrate to serve as priest after his father, shall make atonement; he shall put on the linen garment, the holy garment. **read ›**

52 **Leviticus 21:10** And the high priest among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured, and who has been consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor tear his garments; **read ›**

53 **Numbers 1:16** These are those called from the congregation, leaders of the tribes by their families; they are commanders of thousands in Israel. **read ›**

54 **Numbers 4:16** Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest is overseer of the oil for the light, the compounded incense, the daily sacrifice, and the anointing oil, with the oversight of the whole tabernacle and of all that is in it, in the holy place, in all the works.” **read ›**

55 **Numbers 8:10** And you shall bring the Levites before the Lord, and the children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites. **read ›**

56 **Numbers 10:31** And Moses said, “Do not leave us, since you have been with us in the wilderness, and you shall be an elder among us. **read ›**

57 **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 ›**

58 **Numbers 15:23** just as the Lord commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day the Lord gave the command to you and onward throughout your generations, **read ›**

59 **Numbers 27:16** “Let the Lord God of the spirits and of all flesh select a man over this congregation, **read ›**

60 **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 ›**

61 **Numbers 27:23** and he laid his hands on him and appointed him, just as the Lord had commanded Moses. **read ›**

62 **Judges 18:19** They said to him, “Be quiet; put your hand over your mouth, and come with us, and be a father and a priest to us. Is it better for you to be priest to the house of one man, or to be priest to a tribe and a house, to a clan in Israel?” **read ›**

63 **1 Chronicles 9:13** and their brothers, heads of the houses of their families, one thousand seven hundred and sixty, mighty men of valor for the work of the service of the house of God. **read ›**

64 **1 Chronicles 27:31** And over the sheep was Jaziz the Hagrite. All these were overseers of the possessions of King David. **read ›**

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65 **2 Chronicles 31:16** besides the offspring of the males from three years old and upward, to every one who entered the house of the Lord, by a daily account, for ministry in the daily courses of their arrangement. **read ›**

66 **2 Chronicles 34:13** And they were over the burden-bearers and over all who did the work in every kind of service; and of the Levites there were scribes, judges, and gatekeepers. **read ›**

67 **2 Chronicles 35:10** So the service was set in order, and the priests stood in their place and the Levites in their divisions, according to the commandment of the king. **read ›**

68 **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 ›**

69 **Ezra 1:10** and four hundred and ten double silver ones, and a thousand other vessels. **read ›**

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

71 **Job 4:6** Is not your fear in foolishness, and your hope also, and the evil of your way? **read ›**

72 **Proverbs 14:19** The evil will fall before the good, and the ungodly will wait at the doors of the righteous. **read ›**

73 **Proverbs 14:35** A servant with understanding is acceptable to a king, and by his good conduct he removes dishonor. **read ›**

74 **Ecclesiastes 3:20** All go to one place; all came from the dust, and all will return to the dust. **read ›**

75 **Song of Solomon 6:1** Where has your kinsman gone, O beautiful one among women? Where has your kinsman turned his gaze? And we will seek him with you. **read ›**

76 **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 ›**

77 **Isaiah 7:10** And the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, **read ›**

78 **Isaiah 7:15** Butter and honey he shall eat, before he knows either to prefer evil or to choose the good. **read ›**

79 **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 ›**

80 **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 ›**

81 **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 ›**

82 **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 ›**

83 **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 ›**

84 **Ezekiel 34:10** thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep from their hands, and I will turn them back from shepherding my sheep, and the shepherds shall no longer feed them; and I will rescue my sheep from their mouth, and they shall no longer be food for them. **read ›**

85 **1 Esdras 1:2** having set the priests in their robes by their daily courses in the temple of the Lord. **read ›**

86 **1 Esdras 1:10** And when these things had been done, the priests and the Levites stood in good order, **read ›**

87 **1 Esdras 7:2** supervised the holy works very carefully, working together with the elders of the Jews and the temple officials. **read ›**

88 **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 ›**

89 **1 Esdras 8:94** as has been decided by you and by all who obey the law of the Lord. **read ›**

90 **Judith 4:6** And Joakim the high priest, who was in Jerusalem in those days, wrote to those who lived in Bethulia and Betomasthaim, which is opposite Esdraelon, facing the plain near Dothan, **read ›**

91 **Wisdom of Sirach 7:14** Do not babble in a multitude of elders, and do not repeat a word in your prayer. **read ›**

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

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

94 **Wisdom of Sirach 35:2** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

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95 **Wisdom of Sirach 45:15** Moses filled his hands and anointed him with holy oil; it became for him an everlasting covenant, and for his seed for the days of heaven, to minister to the Lord and to serve as priest together, and to bless his people in his name. **read ›**

96 **Baruch 1:16** and to our kings and to our rulers and to our priests and to our prophets and to our fathers, **read ›**

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

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

99 **1 Maccabees 3:55** After this Judas appointed leaders of the people, commanders of thousands and of hundreds and of fifties and of tens. **read ›**

100 **1 Maccabees 14:19** And these were read before the assembly in Jerusalem. **read ›**

101 **1 Maccabees 14:35** The people saw Simon's deeds and the glory he planned to bring to his nation, and they made him their leader and high priest, because he had done all these things, and for the righteousness and the faithfulness he had kept toward his nation, and because he sought in every way to exalt his people. **read ›**

102 **1 Maccabees 14:38** And King Demetrius confirmed him in the high priesthood accordingly, **read ›**

103 **1 Maccabees 14:42** and that he should be general over them, and that he should take charge of the sanctuary, to appoint men over its works and over the country and over the weapons and over the strongholds; **read ›**

104 **1 Maccabees 14:47** Simon accepted, and agreed to be high priest, and to be general and ethnarch of the Jews and of the priests, and to preside over them all. **read ›**

105 **2 Maccabees 3:20** And all of them, stretching out their hands toward heaven, made their plea. **read ›**

106 **3 Maccabees 6:1** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

107 **4 Maccabees 5:4** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

108 **4 Maccabees 7:10** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

109 **4 Maccabees 7:15** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

110 **1 Enoch 89:19** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

111 **1 Enoch 89:22** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

112 **1 Enoch 89:29** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

113 **1 Enoch 89:36** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

114 **1 Enoch 89:49** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

115 **1 Enoch 89:59** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

116 **1 Enoch 89:65** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

117 **1 Enoch 89:68** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

118 **1 Enoch 89:75** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

119 **1 Enoch 90:1** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

120 **1 Enoch 90:2** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

121 **1 Enoch 90:22** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

122 **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 ›**

123 **Luke 11:16** Others, testing him, sought from him a sign from heaven. **read ›**

124 **Acts 1:20** "For it is written in the book of Psalms: Let his dwelling be made desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it; and: Let another take his office of overseer. **read ›**

125 **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 ›**

126 **Acts 3:3** Seeing Peter and John about to enter the temple, he asked for alms. **read ›**

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

128 **Acts 8:17** Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. **read ›**

129 **Acts 8:19** saying, "Give me this authority too, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." **read ›**

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

131 **Acts 13:3** Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. **read ›**

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132 **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 ›**

133 **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 ›**

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

135 **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 ›**

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

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

138 **Romans 6:18** And having been freed from sin, you were made slaves of righteousness. **read ›**

139 **1 Corinthians 1:16** I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else. **read ›**

140 **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 ›**

141 **1 Timothy 3:1** The saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a good work. **read ›**

142 **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 ›**

143 **1 Timothy 3:12** Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. **read ›**

144 **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 ›**

145 **1 Timothy 5:1** Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father; the younger men as brothers; **read ›**

146 **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 ›**

147 **1 Timothy 5:19** Do not receive an accusation against an elder except at the word of two or three witnesses. **read ›**

148 **1 Timothy 5:22** Lay hands hastily on no one. Do not be a participant in other people's sins. Keep yourself pure. **read ›**

149 **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 ›**

150 **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 ›**

151 **Titus 2:2** that older men be temperate, dignified, sober-minded, sound in faithfulness, love, and perseverance; **read ›**

152 **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 ›**

153 **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 ›**

154 **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 ›**

155 **1 Peter 5:3** not as lording it over those entrusted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *61 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.

Song of Solomon 2:16

Isaiah 60:17 · 63:3

Jeremiah 1:5

Matthew 5:6 · 9:2 · 9:12 · 10:5 · 18:10 · 18:12 · 20:25

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Mark 5:34 · 7:9 · 9:50
Luke 5:20 · 8:18 · 10:16 · 11:23 · 12:47 · 12:48 · 12:50 · 14:11 · 15:4 · 19:10
John 3:3 · 6:34 · 10:11 · 10:12 · 10:16 · 20:22
Acts 1:8 · 9:5
Romans 13:14
1 Corinthians 1:31 · 6:10 · 9:25 · 10:23 · 14:33 · 14:34 · 15:6
2 Corinthians 10:17
Galatians 3:27 · 6:1
Ephesians 2:20 · 4:2 · 4:11 · 6:4
Philippians 1:18 · 2:2 · 3:16
1 Timothy 3:4 · 3:6 · 5:9
2 Timothy 4:6
Titus 1:6
Hebrews 6:6 · 13:17
1 Peter 1:19 · 2:5 · 2:9
1 John 2:27

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 organize the church, and what were their duties?” on June 3, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY