THE QUESTION

In the early church, who held authority: the congregation, the bishop, or the elders?

Asked by a THF member on October 24, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 12 numbered quotations · the 44 early Christian passages and 200 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/in-the-early-church-who-held-authority-the-congregation-the-bishop-or-the

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

The early writers placed final authority in Christ, handed on through the apostles. Under him, the bishop led each church, with the elders and then the deacons under him. Elders were not to act apart from the bishop. The people still had a real part, choosing and approving their leaders.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
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POINT 1 OF 8

Authority comes from Christ through the apostles

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

Clement of Rome says the gospel came from God through Christ to the apostles. Ignatius asks believers to be subject to the bishop and to one another, in the same way Christ was to the Father and the apostles were to Christ.

1 "The apostles have preached the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ has done so from God."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 43, page 9** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

2 "Be subject to the bishop, and to one another, as Jesus Christ is to the Father, according to the flesh, and the apostles are to Christ, and to the Father, and to the Spirit; so that there may be a union both fleshly and spiritual."

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

POINT 2 OF 8

The bishop leads, with elders under him

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

Ignatius tells the church to follow the bishop and to honor the presbytery, or elders, as they would the apostles. Elsewhere he sets the order plainly: elders under the bishop, deacons under the elders, and the people under both.

3 "See that you all follow the bishop, just as Christ Jesus does the Father, and the presbytery as you would the apostles."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 4, page 6** Read it in the library ›
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4 “Presbyters, be subject to the bishop; deacons, to the presbyters; and you, the people, to the presbyters and the deacons.”

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

POINT 3 OF 8

Elders were not to act on their own

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

Cyprian rebukes some elders who ignored the bishop set over them and claimed full authority for themselves. He says this had never been done under the bishops before him, and that it brought shame on the bishop.

5 “For what danger should we not fear from the Lord's displeasure, when some of the presbyters remember neither the Gospel nor their own position, and also consider neither the Lord's future judgment nor the bishop now placed over them, but claim full authority for themselves?”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Epistles* (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 29, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 8

The people chose and approved their bishop

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

The Apostolic Constitutions say a bishop should be chosen by all the people, who then gather and give their consent. Ignatius likewise tells a church that it has the right to elect someone to send as its messenger.

6 “He must be an excellent man, chosen by all the people.”

later in the same passage

“When he has been named and approved, let the people gather on the Lord's Day, together with the presbytery and the bishops who are present, and let them give their consent.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 35, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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7 “Since, according to your prayers and the compassion you feel in Christ Jesus, it has been reported to me that the Church in Antioch, Syria, has peace, it is fitting for you, as a Church of God, to elect a deacon to act as the ambassador of God for you to the brethren there, so that he may rejoice with them when they gather and glorify the name of God.”

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

Source 9, page 6 Read it in the library ›

POINT 5 OF 8

The Church is bishop, clergy and faithful together

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

Cyprian says the Church's order rests on its bishops, who direct its work. But when some claimed to speak for the Church on their own, he answered that the Church is the bishop and clergy together with all who stand firm in the faith.

8 “So the Church is founded upon the bishops, and every act of the Church is directed by these same rulers.”

later in the same passage

“Since this is founded on divine law, I am amazed that some, with reckless boldness, have chosen to write to me as if they were writing in the name of the Church, when the Church is established in the bishop and the clergy, and in all who stand firm in the faith.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Epistles* (c. 248–258 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 30, page 8 Read it in the library ›

POINT 6 OF 8

Each office had its own limits

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

The Apostolic Constitutions list what each rank may do. Even a bishop cannot remove another bishop by himself. Elders may bless and lay on hands but do not ordain. No office holds unlimited power.

9 “A bishop removes from office any clergyman who deserves removal, except a bishop, because he does not have the power to do that by himself.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 36, page 8 Read it in the library ›

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POINT 7 OF 8

Leaders are tested by the apostles' teaching

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

Tertullian says a church's line of bishops matters, but its teaching must also match the apostles'. Origen likewise says only what agrees with the Church's tradition from the apostles is to be received as truth.

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

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Prescription Against Heretics* 32 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 22, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

11 “Therefore, that alone is to be accepted as truth which differs in no way from ecclesiastical and apostolic tradition.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *De Principiis (On First Principles)* (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 26, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 8 OF 8

A true elder must also be righteous

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

Clement of Alexandria warns that holding an office does not make a man righteous. A true elder is one who does and teaches what belongs to the Lord. Office and holy living belong together.

12 “He is not such because men ordained him, nor is he considered righteous because he is a presbyter. Rather, he is counted among the presbyters because he is righteous.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Stromata* 6.13 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 17, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not describe how a church should act if its bishop himself departs from the apostles' teaching.

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- They show the people approving leaders, but do not say the congregation could overrule its bishop.
- 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 44 early Christian passages and 200 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–44, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 45–134, in Bible order), then 110 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 *44 passages from 13 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · source 1*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 4 (1885 English) that speaks to you the word of God remember night and day; and you shall honour him as the Lord… [continues online] **read ›**

Hermas, *c. 90–150 AD · source 2*

2 *Shepherd* 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 ›**

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 3–9*

3 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (on point 2) free." Let governors be obedient to Caesar; soldiers to those that command them; deacons to the presbyters, as to high priests; the presbyters, deacons, and the rest of the clergy… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* **Quote 3, page 2** "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 ›**

5 *Epistle to the Magnesians* (on point 2) 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 ›**

6 *Epistles of Ignatius* **Quote 4, page 3** "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." Presbyters, be subject to the bishop; deacons, to the presbyters; and you… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Epistle to the Magnesians* (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** "ye subject to the bishop, and to one another, as Jesus Christ to the Father, according to the flesh, and the apostles to Christ, and to the Father, and to… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (on point 2) "deacons to the presbyters; the presbyters to the bishop… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 4** "also the nearest Churches have sent, in some cases bishops, and in others presbyters and deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

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Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 10–16*

10 *Against Heresies: Book IV* (1885 English; on point 7) “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 ›**

11 *Against Heresies: Book III* (on point 7) many who had seen Christ, but he was also appointed by apostles in Asia to be the bishop of the Church in Smyrna. I saw him in my early youth… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English; on point 7) “it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its pre-eminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the apostolical… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Against Heresies: Book III* (on point 7) “blessed apostles, having established and built up the Church, entrusted the role of the episcopate to Linus. Paul mentions Linus in the Epistles to Timothy. Anacletus succeeded him, and after… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenæus* together. Thus, the difference in observing the fast fosters the harmony of our shared faith. The presbyters before Soter who led the Church you now govern—namely, Anicetus, Pius, Hyginus… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *Against Heresies: Book III* 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 ›**

16 *Against Heresies: Book II* (1885 English; on point 7) “Universal Church, moreover, through the whole world, has received this tradition from the apostles… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 17–19*

17 *Stromata* 6.13 (1885 English) **Quote 12, page 5** an one is in reality a presbyter of the Church, and a true minister (deacon) of the will of God, if he do and teach what is the Lord's… [continues online] **read ›**

18 *Stromata* 6.13 (on point 2) “equally from Jews and Greeks. Since, according to my opinion, the grades here in the Church, of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, are imitations of the angelic glory, and of that… [continues online] **read ›**

19 *Stromata* 7.1 (1885 English; on point 2) “also, in the Church, the elders attend to the department which has improvement for its object… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 20–24*

20 *Against Marcion* 5 (on point 7) 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 ›**

21 *On Exhortation to Chastity* 7 (1885 English; on point 5) “is the authority of the Church, and the honour which has acquired sanctity through the joint session of the Order, which has established the difference between the Order and the… [continues online] **read ›**

22 *On Prescription Against Heretics* 32 **Quote 10, page 5** “if there are any heresies bold enough to place themselves in the middle of the apostolic age, so that they may seem to have been handed down by the apostles… [continues online] **read ›**

23 *On Baptism* 17 (1885 English; on point 6) “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 ›**

24 *On Prescription Against Heretics* 6 (1885 English; on point 1) “even they did not of themselves choose to introduce anything, but faithfully delivered to the nations (of mankind) the doctrine which they had received from Christ… [continues online] **read ›**

Hippolytus, *c. 200–236 AD · source 25*

25 *Against the Heresy of Noetus* 1 (on point 3) He claimed that he himself was Moses, and that Aaron was his brother. When the blessed presbyters heard this, they called him before the Church and questioned him. But at… [continues online] **read ›**

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Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 26–27*

26 *De Principiis (On First Principles)* (1885 English) **Quote 11, page 5** "seems on that account necessary first of all to fix a definite limit and to lay down an unmistakable rule regarding each one of these, and then to pass to… [continues online] **read ›**

27 *Commentary on Matthew* 12 if you suppose that the whole church is built by God on that one Peter only, what would you say about John, the son of thunder, or about each one… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 28–31*

28 *Epistles* (on point 2) "But deacons ought to remember that the Lord chose apostles, that is, bishops and overseers… [continues online] **read ›**

29 *Epistles* (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 3** "what danger ought we not to fear from the Lord's displeasure, when some of the presbyters, remembering neither the Gospel nor their own place, and, moreover, considering neither the… [continues online] **read ›**

30 *Epistles* **Quote 8, page 4** "commands and warnings we ought to keep, describes the honor of a bishop and the order of His Church in the Gospel. He says to Peter: "I say to you… [continues online] **read ›**

31 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 1) "the power of remitting sins was given to the apostles, and to the churches which they, sent by Christ, established, and to the bishops who succeeded to them by vicarious… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 32–38*

32 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 2) "the bishops and the presbyters are the priests… [continues online] **read ›**

33 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) "constitutions concerning this mystical worship, we, the apostles, do ordain for you, the bishops, presbyters, and deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

34 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 6) "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 ›**

35 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 6, page 3** named and approved, let the people gather on the Lord's Day, together with the presbytery and the bishops who are present, and let them give their consent. And let… [continues online] **read ›**

36 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 9, page 4** does not receive the blessing. 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… [continues online] **read ›**

37 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 2) "both the presbyters and the deacons are those of authority in the Church next to God Almighty and His beloved Son… [continues online] **read ›**

38 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 6) of the clergy to baptize. For example, not readers, singers, doorkeepers, or ministers, but only bishops and presbyters. Even then, the deacons are to assist them in it. But those… [continues online] **read ›**

Archelaus, *c. 270–300 AD · source 39*

39 *Disputation with Manes* 1 (on point 1) of the Church, and has put us in trust of the law, appointing ministers and presbyters and bishops in it. He also describes, in the places assigned separately for that… [continues online] **read ›**

Anonymous · *source 40*

40 *Treatise on Re-Baptism* 1 or discussion could have arisen at all if each one of us had been content with the venerable authority of all the churches, and with fitting humility had wished to… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome · *sources 41–44*

41 *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 ›**

42 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English) us esteem those who have the rule over us… [continues online] **read ›**

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43 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Quote 1, page 2** therefore sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ. Both these appointments were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God. Having received their orders, and… [continues online] **read ›**

44 *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 ›**

THE BIBLE *90 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

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 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 ›**

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

48 **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 ›**

49 **1 Chronicles 9:10** Of the priests: Jehoiada, Jehoiarib, Jachin, **read ›**

50 **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 ›**

51 **2 Chronicles 19:11** And behold, Amariah the priest is leader over you in every matter of the Lord, and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael is the leader of the house of Judah in every matter of the king; and the scribes and the Levites are before you. Be strong and do it, and the Lord will be with the good.” **read ›**

52 **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 ›**

53 **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 ›**

54 **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 ›**

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

56 **Ezra 1:11** All the vessels of gold and silver were five thousand four hundred; all these went up with Sheshbazzar from the exile out of Babylon to Jerusalem. **read ›**

57 **Ezra 6:4** with three strong courses of stone and one course of timber; and the expense shall be given from the king’s house. **read ›**

58 **Ezra 6:11** And a decree has been issued by me that if any man alters this word, a beam shall be pulled down from his house, and he shall be lifted up and struck on it; and his house shall be forfeited to me. **read ›**

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

60 **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 ›**

61 **Ezra 9:12** Now therefore do not give your daughters to their sons, and do not take their daughters for your sons; and you shall never seek their peace or their good, so that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it as an inheritance to your sons forever.’ **read ›**

62 **Ezra 9:13** And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great trespass—for there is none like our God, for you have lightened our acts of lawlessness and given us salvation— **read ›**

63 **Nehemiah 5:9** And I said, “The thing that you are doing is not good. You will not walk this way in the fear of our God, because of the taunts of the Gentiles our enemies. (Septuagint 2 Esdras 15:9 (Nehemiah 5:9 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

64 **Nehemiah 6:18** For many in Judah were bound to him by oath, because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah; and Jehohanan, Tobiah’s son, had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah as his wife. (Septuagint 2 Esdras 16:18 (Nehemiah 6:18 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

65 **Nehemiah 10:14** The rulers of the people: Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu; (Septuagint 2 Esdras 20:15 (Nehemiah 10:14 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

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66 **Esther 8:11** in which he commanded them to use their own laws in every city, and to come to their own aid, and to deal with their opponents and those who attacked them as they wished, **read ›**

67 **Proverbs 10:32** The lips of righteous men drip graces, but the mouth of the ungodly is turned away. **read ›**

68 **Proverbs 14:17** A hot-tempered man acts without counsel, but a man of sound judgment bears many things. **read ›**

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

70 **Ecclesiastes 3:15** What has been already is, and what is to be has already been; and God will seek the one who is pursued. **read ›**

71 **Isaiah 3:20** and the set of glorious ornaments, and the armlets, and the bracelets, and the braided work, and the rings, and the right-hand bracelets, **read ›**

72 **Ezekiel 26:3** therefore thus says the Lord: Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring up many nations against you, as the sea comes up with its waves. **read ›**

73 **Amos 6:3** You who are coming to the evil day, who draw near and lay hold of false Sabbaths, **read ›**

74 **Amos 9:2** If they hide themselves in Hades, from there my hand shall drag them up; and if they go up to heaven, from there I will bring them down. **read ›**

75 **1 Esdras 1:2** having set the priests in their robes by their daily courses in the temple of the Lord. **read ›**

76 **1 Esdras 1:10** And when these things had been done, the priests and the Levites stood in good order, **read ›**

77 **1 Esdras 1:11** having the unleavened bread, by tribes and by the divisions of the fathers, before the people, to offer to the Lord as it is written in the book of Moses; and so they did in the morning. **read ›**

78 **1 Esdras 5:39** When the record of the descent of these men was sought in the register and was not found, they were excluded from serving as priests. **read ›**

79 **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 ›**

80 **1 Esdras 6:4** and said to them, “By whose command are you building this house and finishing this roof and all the other things? And who are the builders who are finishing these things?” **read ›**

81 **1 Esdras 6:11** Then we asked these elders, saying, ‘By whose command are you building this house and laying the foundations of these works?’ **read ›**

82 **1 Esdras 7:2** supervised the holy works very carefully, working together with the elders of the Jews and the temple officials. **read ›**

83 **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 ›**

84 **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 ›**

85 **1 Esdras 9:12** Let the leaders of the multitude stay, and let all those of our settlements who have foreign wives come at an appointed time, **read ›**

86 **1 Esdras 9:13** with the elders and the judges of each place, until we turn away the wrath of the Lord from us over this matter.” **read ›**

87 **Wisdom of Solomon 9:2** and by your wisdom formed man, to have dominion over the creatures made by you, **read ›**

88 **Wisdom of Solomon 10:2** and gave him strength to rule over all things. **read ›**

89 **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 ›**

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

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

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

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

94 **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 ›**

95 **1 Maccabees 4:42** He chose unblemished priests, devoted to the law; **read ›**

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96 **1 Maccabees 10:32** I also give up my authority over the citadel in Jerusalem and give it to the high priest, so that he may station in it men of his own choosing to guard it. **read ›**

97 **1 Maccabees 10:38** And as for the three districts that were added to Judea from the country of Samaria, let them be added to Judea, so that they may be reckoned to be under one man and obey no other authority but the high priest's. **read ›**

98 **1 Maccabees 14:17** But when they heard that Simon his brother had become high priest in his place and was ruling over the country and the cities in it, **read ›**

99 **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 ›**

100 **1 Maccabees 14:38** And King Demetrius confirmed him in the high priesthood accordingly, **read ›**

101 **1 Maccabees 14:41** and that the Jews and the priests were well pleased that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a faithful prophet should arise; **read ›**

102 **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 ›**

103 **1 Maccabees 14:44** None of the people or the priests shall be permitted to set aside any of these things, or to oppose what he says, or to convene a gathering in the country without him, or to be clothed in purple or wear a gold clasp. **read ›**

104 **2 Maccabees 3:15** The priests, throwing themselves down before the altar in their priestly robes, called toward heaven upon him who had given the law about deposits, that he would keep them safe for those who had deposited them. **read ›**

105 **2 Maccabees 4:31** So the king went quickly to settle matters, leaving as his deputy Andronicus, one of the men of high rank. **read ›**

106 **2 Maccabees 11:23** Now that our father has passed on to the gods, we wish the subjects of the kingdom to be free from disturbance and to attend to their own affairs. **read ›**

107 **4 Maccabees 3:20** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

108 **1 Enoch 61:6** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

109 **Matthew 21:23** When he had come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority do you do these things? Who gave you this authority?" **read ›**

110 **Luke 1:6** They were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. **read ›**

111 **Luke 6:13** When it was day, he called his disciples, and from them he chose twelve, whom he also named apostles: **read ›**

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

113 **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 ›**

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

115 **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 ›**

116 **Acts 15:4** When they reached Jerusalem, the church, the apostles, and the elders welcomed them, and they reported all that God had done with them. **read ›**

117 **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 ›**

118 **Romans 13:1** Let every soul be in subjection to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those who exist are ordained by God. **read ›**

119 **1 Corinthians 1:16** I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else. **read ›**

120 **1 Corinthians 11:3** But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. **read ›**

121 **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 ›**

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

123 **Philippians 1:1** Paul and Timothy, slaves of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: **read ›**

124 **1 Thessalonians 5:12** Now we ask you, brothers, to recognize those who labor among you and lead you in the Lord and admonish you, **read ›**

125 **1 Timothy 3:1** The saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a good work. **read ›**

126 **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 ›**

127 **1 Timothy 3:12** Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. **read ›**

128 **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 ›**

129 **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 ›**

130 **1 Timothy 5:19** Do not receive an accusation against an elder except at the word of two or three witnesses. **read ›**

131 **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 ›**

132 **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 ›**

133 **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 ›**

134 **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 ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *110 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 · 30:19 · 31:20

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

Matthew 5:6 · 5:9 · 5:17 · 7:24 · 10:5 · 10:19 · 11:5 · 13:27 · 16:18 · 16:19 · 22:39 · 24:5 · 28:19

Mark 7:9 · 8:38 · 12:39 · 16:17

Luke 10:16 · 10:20 · 11:23 · 12:47 · 12:50 · 16:15 · 20:46 · 21:14

John 7:37 · 15:1 · 15:12 · 17:6 · 17:11 · 20:22 · 21:17

Acts 1:8 · 4:32 · 9:5 · 20:29

Romans 1:17 · 2:13 · 11:4 · 13:14 · 15:27

1 Corinthians 1:10 · 1:30 · 6:10 · 9:25 · 10:4 · 10:23 · 10:33 · 12:3 · 12:8 · 14:21 · 14:33 · 14:34 · 15:6 · 15:41

2 Corinthians 3:18 · 11:14

Galatians 1:8 · 1:10 · 3:11 · 3:27 · 5:20

Ephesians 2:20 · 4:2 · 4:5 · 4:13 · 4:27 · 5:18 · 6:5 · 6:9

Philippians 1:18 · 2:2 · 3:16 · 4:3

Colossians 3:22 · 3:25 · 4:1

1 Thessalonians 4:17

2 Thessalonians 3:6

1 Timothy 2:4 · 5:21 · 6:16

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2 Timothy 3:8
Titus 1:6 · 2:14 · 3:10 · 3:11
Hebrews 6:6 · 10:38 · 13:7
James 5:16
1 Peter 1:17 · 2:5
1 John 2:27
Revelation 1:6 · 2:5 · 4:4 · 11:16 · 22:18

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

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “In the early church, who held authority: the congregation, the bishop, or the elders?” on October 24, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY