THE QUESTION

Should grown children take care of their parents in old age?

Asked by a THF member on May 2, 2026 · published November 9, 2026, updated November 11, 2026 · 8 numbered quotations · the 17 early Christian passages and 117 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/should-grown-children-take-care-of-their-parents-in-old-age

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

Yes. Early Christian writers treated care for aging parents as part of honoring father and mother. Origen says this honor includes sharing food and clothing, Jesus condemned religious excuses for not helping parents, Clement said marriage raises children who can support parents in old age, and Commodianus rebuked those who would not feed their parents.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

IN THIS STUDY

1	Honoring parents includes food and clothing	2
2	Jesus rejected religious excuses for neglecting parents	2
3	Children can support their parents in old age	3
4	Not feeding your parents is condemned	3
5	Christians were known for honoring their parents	3
6	Paul says children should repay their parents	4
	What these passages don't tell us	4
	The Sources: 17 early Christian passages and 117 Bible verses, with links	5

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

POINT 1 OF 6

Honoring parents includes food and clothing

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

Origen explains the commandment to honor father and mother. He says this honor is more than respect. Part of it is sharing the basic needs of life with parents, such as food and clothing, and any other kindness children can show them.

1 “And God said, "Honor your father and your mother," Exodus 20:12, teaching that a child should give his parents the honor that is due to them. One part of this honor to parents was to share with them the necessities of life, such as food and clothing, and anything else by which children could show kindness to their own parents.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Commentary on Matthew* 11 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 10, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 6

Jesus rejected religious excuses for neglecting parents

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

In Tatian's Gospel harmony, Jesus rebukes a custom that let a man call what his parents needed an offering. Under that custom he was no longer allowed to do anything for his father or mother. Jesus calls this breaking God's commandment for the sake of a human tradition.

2 “Jesus answered and said to them, "Why do you also break the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever speaks evil of his father or his mother shall surely die.' But you say, 'If a man says to his father or to his mother, "Whatever you would receive from me is an offering,"' then you do not allow him to do anything for his father or his mother.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tatian,** *Diatessaron* 20 (c. 150–180 AD) **Source 5, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

POINT 3 OF 6

Children can support their parents in old age

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

Clement of Alexandria names marriage as a help for people as they grow older. One reason he gives is that it raises children who can support their parents in old age.

3 “Now marriage is a help for those who are older. It provides a spouse to care for a person, and it raises children who can support that person's old age.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Stromata* 2.23 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 7, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 6

Not feeding your parents is condemned

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

Commodianus scolds greedy rich men who love money and ignore the poor. Among his charges, he says they do not even feed their own parents who are in their care, as a sign of how low they have sunk.

4 “You are always thirsty for riches. You lift yourself up too high, and you carry pride, and you are not willing to look on the poor. Now you do not even feed your own parents when they are under your care.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Commodianus,** *Writings* (c. 250–300 AD) **Source 15, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 5 OF 6

Christians were known for honoring their parents

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

Aristides, describing Christians to a king, lists honor for father and mother as part of their way of life. Ignatius repeats the commandment to children, with its promise that it will be well with them.

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

5 “They honor father and mother, and they show kindness to those near them.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Aristides,** *Apology* 15 (c. 125–140 AD) **Source 4, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

6 “You parents, provide a holy training to your children. You children, "honor your parents, that it may be well with you.”"

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistles of Ignatius* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 2, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 6

Paul says children should repay their parents

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

Chrysostom, a later writer (4th century), recalls Paul's words that children should first show godliness at home and repay their parents. Elsewhere he says parents, after God, are the authors of our being, so they should be the first to receive the fruit of our good deeds.

7 “He had said, "Let them first learn to show godliness at home, and to repay their parents."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on First Timothy* (c. 386–407 AD) **Source 16, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

8 “This is because they, more than all others, are, after God, the authors of our being. So it is right that they should be the first to receive the fruit of our right actions, and then all the rest of mankind.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Ephesians* 21 (c. 386–407 AD) **Source 17, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not say how much help children must give or how care should be arranged.
- They do not answer whether Christians should avoid planning or saving for the future.
- They do not settle what to do when a parent is abusive or dangerous.

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

- 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 17 early Christian passages and 117 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–17, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 18–91, in Bible order), then 43 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 *17 passages from 9 writers*

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 1–3*

1 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (1885 English; on point 5) "obey your parents, and have an affection for them, as workers together with God for your birth [into the world… [continues online] **read ›**

2 *Epistles of Ignatius* **Quote 6, page 4** "they have been united according to the will of God. You parents, provide a holy training to your children. You children, "honor your parents, that it may be well with… [continues online] **read ›**

3 *Epistles of Ignatius* (1885 English; on point 5) "is right, therefore, that we should honour those who have had a part in giving us birth… [continues online] **read ›**

Aristides, *c. 125–140 AD · source 4*

4 *Apology* 15 **Quote 5, page 4** "do not worship idols made in the image of man… [continues online] **read ›**

Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · source 5*

5 *Diatessaron* 20 (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** "God said, Honour your father and your mother… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 6–8*

6 *Stromata* 4.8 (on point 5) as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is pleasing to the… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Stromata* 2.23 (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 3** "marriage is a help in the case of those advanced in years, by furnishing a spouse to take care of one, and by rearing children of her to nourish one… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Stromata* 6.16 (1885 English; on point 5) "the fifth in order is the command on the honour of father and mother… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · source 9*

9 *Ad Nationes* 9 (1885 English; on point 5) "if sons have seats in heaven owing to their piety to their parents, why are not those noble youths of Argos rather accounted gods, because they, to save their mother… [continues online] **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 10–11*

10 *Commentary on Matthew* 11 **Quote 1, page 2** “of God's most urgent commandments. One of them was the fifth in the Ten Commandments: "Honor your father and your mother, that it may be well with you, and… [continues online] **read ›**

11 *Commentary on Matthew* 11 (on point 2) “the Pentateuch. Since we have explained how they set aside the word of God that says, "Honor your father and your mother," by saying, "Whoever says to his father or… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 12–14*

12 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 5) “honour your parents; to avoid all unlawful actions… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 5) “5:38 He who had commanded to honour our parents, was Himself subject to them… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 5) “if the divine word says about our parents according to the flesh, "Honor your father and your mother, that it may be well with you," Exodus 20:12, and, "He… [continues online] **read ›**

Commodianus, *c. 250–300 AD · source 15*

15 *Writings* (1885 English) **Quote 4, page 3** “you do not even feed your parents themselves when placed under you… [continues online] **read ›**

John Chrysostom, *c. 386–407 AD · sources 16–17*

16 *Homilies on First Timothy* **Quote 7, page 4** “He had said, "Let them first learn to show godliness at home, and to repay their parents."” **read ›**

17 *Homilies on Ephesians* 21 **Quote 8, page 4** “This is because they, more than all others, are, after God, the authors of our being. So it is right that they should be the first to receive the fruit of our right actions, and then all the rest of mankind.” **read ›**

THE BIBLE *74 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

18 **Genesis 15:15** But you shall go to your fathers in peace, nourished in a good old age. **read ›**

19 **Exodus 20:12** Honor your father and your mother, that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the good land which the Lord your God gives you. **read ›**

20 **Exodus 21:16** Whoever steals one of the children of Israel, and overpowers him and sells him, and he is found with him, shall surely die. (Septuagint Exodus 21:17 (Exodus 21:16 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

21 **Exodus 34:16** and you take some of their daughters for your sons, and give some of your daughters to their sons, and your daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, and your sons prostitute themselves to their gods. **read ›**

22 **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 ›**

23 **Numbers 6:7** not for father or mother, nor for brother or sister; he shall not defile himself for them when they die, because the vow of his God is upon him, upon his head. **read ›**

24 **Deuteronomy 5:16** Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you, that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the land that the Lord your God is giving you. **read ›**

25 **Deuteronomy 21:19** then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of the place, **read ›**

26 **Deuteronomy 28:50** a nation shameless of face, which shall not respect the person of the old, nor show mercy to the young. **read ›**

27 **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 ›**

28 **Ruth 4:15** He shall be to you a restorer of your soul and one to nourish your old age; for your daughter-in-law who has loved you has borne him, she who is better to you than seven sons.” **read ›**

29 **Job 20:10** May lesser men destroy his sons, and may his hands kindle pains. **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

30 **Psalms 4:3** But know that the Lord has made his holy one wonderful; the Lord will hear me when I cry to him. (Septuagint Psalm 4:4 (Psalm 4:3 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

31 **Psalms 10:13** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

32 **Psalms 14:3** They have all turned aside; together they have become worthless; there is none who does goodness, there is not even one. Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have dealt deceitfully; the poison of cobras is under their lips; their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes. (Septuagint Psalm 13:3 (Psalm 14:3 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

33 **Psalms 27:10** For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord has taken me to himself. (Septuagint Psalm 26:10 (Psalm 27:10 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

34 **Proverbs 1:8** Hear, son, the instruction of your father, and do not reject the rules of your mother. **read ›**

35 **Proverbs 6:20** Son, keep the laws of your father, and do not reject the rules of your mother; **read ›**

36 **Proverbs 17:6** Children's children are the crown of old men, and their fathers are the boast of children. The faithful man has the whole world of wealth, but the faithless not even an obol. **read ›**

37 **Proverbs 19:26** He who dishonors his father and drives away his mother will be put to shame and will be open to blame. **read ›**

38 **Proverbs 22:6** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

39 **Proverbs 23:22** Son, hear your father who fathered you, and do not despise your mother because she has grown old. **read ›**

40 **Proverbs 23:25** Let your father and mother rejoice over you, and let her who bore you be glad. **read ›**

41 **Proverbs 30:11** A wicked offspring curses its father and does not bless its mother. **read ›**

42 **Isaiah 2:10** And now enter into the rocks, and hide in the earth from before the fear of the Lord, and from the glory of his might, when he rises to shatter the earth. **read ›**

43 **Isaiah 5:12** For they drink wine with lyre and psaltery and tambourines and flutes, but they do not look upon the works of the Lord, and they do not consider the works of his hands. **read ›**

44 **Isaiah 6:12** And after this God will remove the men far away, and those who are left shall be multiplied upon the land; **read ›**

45 **Isaiah 8:19** And if they say to you, "Seek the mediums, and those who speak from the earth, the empty talkers, who speak from the belly" — shall not a nation seek out its God? Why do they seek the dead concerning the living? **read ›**

46 **Isaiah 15:4** For Heshbon and Elealeh have cried out; their voice was heard as far as Jahaz. Therefore the loins of the land of Moab cry aloud; her soul will know. **read ›**

47 **Isaiah 15:5** The heart of the land of Moab cries out within her as far as Zoar, for she is a young cow three years old; and on the ascent of Luith they will go up to you weeping by the way of Horonaim. She cries out, "Ruin and trembling!" **read ›**

48 **Ezekiel 21:19** "And you, Son of man, appoint for yourself two ways, for the sword of the king of Babylon to enter; the two shall go out from one country; and a hand at the head of the way of the city—at the head of the way you shall set it, (Septuagint Ezekiel 21:24 (Ezekiel 21:19 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

49 **Ezekiel 27:14** From the house of Togarmah horses and horsemen supplied your market. **read ›**

50 **Daniel 1:8** And Daniel resolved in his heart that he would not defile himself at all with the king's table or with the wine he drank; and he asked the chief eunuch that he might not defile himself at all. **read ›**

51 **Tobit 4:3** And he called him and said, "My child, if I die, bury me; and do not neglect your mother. Honor her all the days of your life, and do what pleases her, and do not grieve her. **read ›**

52 **Tobit 8:21** and that then he should take half of his possessions and go in good health to his father, "and the rest when my wife and I die." **read ›**

53 **Tobit 10:13** And he said to his daughter, "Honor your parents-in-law; they are now your parents. May I hear a good report of you." And he kissed her. And Edna said to Tobias, "Dear brother, may the Lord of heaven restore you, and may he grant me to see your children by Sarah my daughter, that I may rejoice before the Lord. And see, I entrust my daughter to you as a deposit; do not grieve her." **read ›**

54 **Tobit 14:3** And he grew very old; and he called his son and his son's sons, and said to him, "My child, take your sons. See, I have grown old, and I am about to depart from life. **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

55 **Tobit 14:13** and he grew old in honor. And he buried his parents-in-law gloriously, and he inherited their property, and that of Tobit his father. **read ›**

56 **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 ›**

57 **Wisdom of Sirach 3:3** He who honors his father will make atonement for sins, **read ›**

58 **Wisdom of Sirach 3:4** and he who glorifies his mother is like one who lays up treasure. **read ›**

59 **Wisdom of Sirach 3:5** He who honors his father will be gladdened by children, and on the day of his prayer he will be heard. **read ›**

60 **Wisdom of Sirach 3:6** He who glorifies his father will live long, and he who listens to the Lord will give rest to his mother, **read ›**

61 **Wisdom of Sirach 3:7** and he will serve his parents as masters. **read ›**

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

63 **Wisdom of Sirach 3:11** For a man's glory comes from the honor of his father, and a mother in disgrace is a reproach to children. **read ›**

64 **Wisdom of Sirach 3:12** My child, help your father in his old age, and do not grieve him as long as he lives. **read ›**

65 **Wisdom of Sirach 3:16** He who forsakes his father is like a blasphemer, and he who angers his mother is cursed by the Lord. **read ›**

66 **Wisdom of Sirach 14:11** My child, as you have the means, do good to yourself, and bring offerings to the Lord worthily. **read ›**

67 **Wisdom of Sirach 23:14** Remember your father and your mother, for you sit in the midst of nobles, lest you forget yourself before them, and by your habit become a fool, and wish that you had not been born, and curse the day of your birth. **read ›**

68 **Wisdom of Sirach 35:22** and guard yourself against your own children. **read ›**

69 **Wisdom of Sirach 41:17** Be ashamed of sexual immorality before father and mother, and of a lie before a leader and a mighty man; **read ›**

70 **Wisdom of Sirach 42:9** A daughter is a hidden sleeplessness to a father, and anxiety for her drives away sleep: in her youth, lest she pass her prime, and when married, lest she be hated; **read ›**

71 **3 Maccabees 5:31** "If your parents were here, or your children, they would have furnished this lavish feast for the wild beasts, instead of the Jews, who are blameless and have shown complete and steadfast loyalty to me and to my ancestors in an outstanding way. **read ›**

72 **4 Maccabees 2:10** For the Law masters even goodwill toward parents, not betraying virtue on their account; **read ›**

73 **4 Maccabees 5:12** and, honoring my kindly advice, have compassion on your own old age? **read ›**

74 **4 Maccabees 6:12** So, partly having mercy on his old age, **read ›**

75 **4 Maccabees 8:19** Let us have mercy on our own youth and have compassion on our mother's old age; **read ›**

76 **4 Maccabees 15:4** O how might I describe the child-loving passions of parents, who stamp a wonderful likeness of soul and form upon the small imprint of a child, especially since mothers are more sympathetic in their feelings toward those they have borne! **read ›**

77 **4 Maccabees 15:5** For the weaker mothers are in soul, and the more children they bear, the more they love their children. **read ›**

78 **4 Maccabees 15:13** O holy nature and parental love, tender toward parents, and nurture, and unconquerable passions of mothers! **read ›**

79 **4 Maccabees 18:9** And when these sons had grown up, their father died. Blessed was he! For having sought a life blessed with children, he did not suffer grief at the time of childlessness. **read ›**

80 **1 Enoch 99:5** In that very time those who give birth shall cast out and tear away and abandon the infant babe; and those who are with child shall miscarry; and those who nurse shall throw away their children, and shall certainly not return to their infants nor to the babies at the breast, nor shall they spare them at all. **read ›**

81 **Matthew 15:4** For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Let him who speaks evil of father or mother surely die.' **read ›**

82 **Matthew 19:19** Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

83 **Mark 7:10** For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Let him who speaks evil of father or mother surely die.’ **read ›**

84 **Mark 7:12** you no longer allow him to do anything for his father or mother, **read ›**

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

86 **2 Corinthians 12:14** Behold, this is the third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I seek not your possessions, but you. For the children ought not to save up for the parents, but the parents for the children. **read ›**

87 **Ephesians 6:1** Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. **read ›**

88 **Ephesians 6:2** Honor your father and your mother—which is the first commandment with a promise— **read ›**

89 **Colossians 3:20** Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord. **read ›**

90 **1 Timothy 5:1** Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father; the younger men as brothers; **read ›**

91 **1 Timothy 5:4** But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them learn first to show piety toward their own family and to repay their parents, for this is acceptable in the sight of God. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *43 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.

Leviticus 20:9

Matthew 5:7 · 5:22 · 5:33 · 5:38 · 5:43 · 6:10 · 10:2 · 15:5 · 19:4 · 19:6 · 23:2 · 23:13 · 23:25 · 26:57 · 27:29 · 27:34

Mark 14:5

Luke 1:6 · 2:51 · 16:14

John 12:5 · 12:6 · 13:34 · 17:3 · 19:17 · 21:19

Acts 17:23 · 20:35

1 Corinthians 11:3 · 11:11 · 15:8

Ephesians 5:21 · 5:28 · 6:16

Philippians 2:25

Colossians 3:11 · 3:18 · 4:1

1 Thessalonians 5:18

1 Timothy 6:5 · 6:10

1 Peter 3:6

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

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

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Should grown children take care of their parents in old age?” on May 2, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

Library only. This study was written only from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed above, with a link to read it.

How it was made. Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.

How to cite this study. The Historic Faith, “Should grown children take care of their parents in old age?” Early Church Questions, published November 9, 2026, https://thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/should-grown-children-take-care-of-their-parents-in-old-age. To cite one quotation, add its number and source, for example “quote 1, source 10.”

© 2026 The Historic Faith. Selection, arrangement and editing by THF; machine-compiled text and public-domain quotations are not claimed. For personal study; please don’t republish.

THEHISTORICFAITH.COM

THE END OF THIS STUDY