THE QUESTION

What did the early Christians teach about marriage and raising children?

Asked by a THF member on April 13, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 15 numbered quotations · the 22 early Christian passages and 163 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-did-the-early-christians-teach-about-marriage-and-raising-children

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

Early Christian writers taught that husbands should love their wives as partners, wives should love and honor their husbands, and both should stay faithful. Parents were to raise children in the fear of God, teach them Scripture and useful work, and correct them firmly, while taking care not to provoke them to anger.

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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IN THIS STUDY

1	Husbands should love their wives as partners	2	6	Children need true Christian training	4
2	Wives should love and honor their husbands	2	7	Teach useful work and correct with care	5
3	Marriage is an equal yoke before God	3	8	A well-run home prepares church leaders	6
4	Caring for a family is service to God	3		What these passages don't tell us	6
5	Faithfulness guards the heart as well	4		The Sources: 22 early Christian passages and 163 Bible verses, with links	7

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POINT 1 OF 8

Husbands should love their wives as partners

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

Ignatius tells husbands to love their wives as fellow servants of God and partners for life. He also points back to creation: God gave one woman to one man, so love in marriage is faithful and single-hearted.

1 “Husbands, love your wives, as fellow-servants of God, as your own body, as the partners of your life, and your co-workers in the procreation of children.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 2, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

2 “Let husbands love their wives, remembering that, at creation, one woman, and not many, was given to one man.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistles of Ignatius* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 3, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 8

Wives should love and honor their husbands

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

Polycarp asks that wives be taught to love their husbands sincerely and purely. Ignatius adds that wives should be subject to their husbands in the fear of God, so the wife's role is set inside her faith.

3 “Next, teach your wives to live in the faith given to them, and in love and purity, tenderly loving their own husbands in all truth, and loving everyone equally in all chastity; and to raise their children in the knowledge and fear of God.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Polycarp,** *Epistle to the Philippians* (c. 100–155 AD) **Source 5, page 7** Read it in the library ›
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4 “Wives, be subject to your husbands in the fear of God; and you virgins, to Christ in purity, not regarding marriage as an abomination, but desiring that which is better, not for the reproach of wedlock, but for the sake of meditating on the law.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 2, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 3 OF 8

Marriage is an equal yoke before God

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

Clement of Alexandria says man and woman share the same virtue, the same church and the same salvation. He calls marriage an equal yoke, two people pulling together under one Lord.

5 “Let us hold fast to what is most certain, the cable of faith in Him, and understand that the virtue of man and woman is the same. For if the God of both is one, then the master of both is also one.”

later in the same passage

“There is one church, one self-control, and one modesty. Their food is shared, and marriage is an equal yoke.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 1.4 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 11, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 8

Caring for a family is service to God

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

Clement of Alexandria does not treat marriage as second-rate. He says it has its own duties that belong to the Lord, namely caring for a wife and children and looking after the whole household.

6 “For just as chastity has its own duties and ministries, marriage also has its own duties and ministries that belong to the Lord. I mean the care of children and of a wife.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Stromata* 3 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 7, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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POINT 5 OF 8

Faithfulness guards the heart as well

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

Hermas warns that sin starts with a thought about another man's wife, and that remembering one's own wife keeps a man from sin. Ignatius calls wives to see their husbands as their only partners, joined by God's will.

7 “But if you always remember your own wife, you will never sin.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Hermas,** *Shepherd* (c. 90–150 AD) *THF's updated English*

Source 1, page 7 Read it in the library ›

8 “Let them also be chaste, considering their husbands as their only partners, to whom they have been united according to the will of God.”

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

Source 3, page 7 Read it in the library ›

POINT 6 OF 8

Children need true Christian training

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

Clement of Rome wants children taught humility and the fear of God. Polycarp says the same, and Ignatius tells children to obey their parents and love them, since parents worked together with God to bring them into the world.

9 “Let your children receive true Christian training; let them learn how valuable humility is with God—how much the spirit of pure affection can prevail with Him—how excellent and great His fear is, and how it saves all those who walk in it with a pure mind.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* *THF's updated English*

Source 21, page 8 Read it in the library ›

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10 “Next, teach your wives to live in the faith given to them, and in love and purity, tenderly loving their own husbands in all truth, and loving everyone equally in all chastity; and to raise their children in the knowledge and fear of God.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Polycarp,** *Epistle to the Philippians* (c. 100–155 AD) **Source 5, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

11 “Children, obey your parents, and have affection for them, as workers together with God for your birth into the world.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 2, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 7 OF 8

Teach useful work and correct with care

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

A church order tells fathers to teach their children a trade so they are not idle, and not to be afraid to correct them. It even urges strict physical correction. Clement of Alexandria balances this with Paul's warning not to provoke children to anger.

12 “Teach them trades that fit and agree with the word, so that they do not become wasteful through idleness, go on without punishment from their parents, get freedom before their time, and stray from what is good.”

later in the same passage

“Therefore, do not be afraid to correct them and to teach them wisdom with firmness. For your correction will not kill them, but will rather preserve them.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 18, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

13 “Parents, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 3.12 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 9, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

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POINT 8 OF 8

A well-run home prepares church leaders

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

The early church looked at a man's home before ordaining him. It asked whether he had raised his children in a godly way, and Clement of Alexandria says ruling one's own house is training for leading the church.

14 “In this way, examination should be made when he is to receive ordination and be placed in his bishopric, to see whether he is serious, faithful, and respectable; whether he has a serious and faithful wife, or formerly had such a wife; whether he has brought up his children in a godly way and raised them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; Ephesians 6:4 and whether his servants fear and respect him and all obey him.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 17, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

15 “Therefore, he says, bishops ought to be appointed from those who have first trained themselves in ruling their own house, so that they may also be able to preside over the whole Church.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Stromata* 3 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 7, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not settle how strict physical correction of children should be in practice.
- They give general duties, not detailed guidance for every family problem or stage of life.
- 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.

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WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 22 early Christian passages and 163 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–22, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 23–71, in Bible order), then 114 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 *22 passages from 10 writers*

Hermas, *c. 90–150 AD · source 1*

1 *Shepherd* **Quote 7, page 4** continues to live with her?" And he said to me, "As long as he remains ignorant of her sin, the husband commits no transgression in living with her. But if… [continues online] **read ›**

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 2–4*

2 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* **Quotes 1, 4, 11, pages 2, 3, 5** "bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and teach them the holy… [continues online] **read ›**

3 *Epistles of Ignatius* (1885 English) **Quotes 2, 8, pages 2, 4** "parents, impart a holy training to your children… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Epistles of Ignatius* (1885 English; on point 6) "children, reverence your parents. Ye parents, "bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Honour those [who continue] in virginity, as the priestesses of Christ… [continues online] **read ›**

Polycarp, *c. 100–155 AD · source 5*

5 *Epistle to the Philippians* (1885 English) **Quotes 3, 10, pages 2, 5** "to train up their children in the knowledge and fear of God… [continues online] **read ›**

Justin Martyr, *c. 130–165 AD · source 6*

6 *Second Apology* "excesses, distancing her through his behavior. She considered it wicked to continue living as a wife with a husband who sought pleasure in ways contrary to natural and moral law… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 7–11*

7 *Stromata* 3 **Quotes 6, 15, pages 3, 6** "marriage, when by agreement it gives time to prayer, is a teaching of self-control. For he added the words "by agreement," so that no one might dissolve a marriage… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Stromata* 4.20 (1885 English; on point 2) "therefore, the apostle says in the Epistle to Titus, that the elder women should be of godly behaviour, should not be slanderers, not enslaved to much wine… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Instructor* 3.12 (1885 English) **Quote 13, page 5** "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Stromata* 7.12 (1885 English) "he that has no family is in a great degree free of temptation… [continues online] **read ›**

11 *Instructor* 1.4 (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 3** "church, one temperance, one modesty; their food is common, marriage an equal yoke… [continues online] **read ›**

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Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 12–14*

12 *On Exhortation to Chastity* 12 (on point 4) “house to be managed; a family to be governed… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Apology* 46 (1885 English; on point 5) “Christian husband has nothing to do with any but his own wife… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *On Monogamy* 11 solemn engagement, and of widows whose Order you have yourself refused. And plainly they will give husbands and wives as they would morsels of bread. For this is their rendering… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · source 15*

15 *Commentary on Matthew* 14 (1885 English; on point 8) “any one is blameless, the husband of one wife, having children, that believe Titus 1:5-6 — of course — and so on… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 16–19*

16 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 2) the merchants' ships. She brings her food from far. She rises also while it is yet night, and gives meat to her household, and food to her maidens. She considers… [continues online] **read ›**

17 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) **Quote 14, page 6** “he has educated his children piously, and has brought them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord… [continues online] **read ›**

18 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) **Quote 12, page 5** “afterwards, Beat his sides while he is an infant, lest he be hardened and disobey you… [continues online] **read ›**

19 *Apostolic Constitutions* “the widows of the Church; for those in… [continues online] **read ›**

Lactantius, *c. 290–320 AD · source 20*

20 *Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 38 (1885 English) “there be a community of wives also, and of children… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome · *sources 21–22*

21 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English) **Quote 9, page 4** “your children be partakers of true Christian training… [continues online] **read ›**

22 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English; on point 2) “ye taught them that, living in the rule of obedience, they should manage their household affairs becomingly, and be in every respect marked by discretion… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *49 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

23 **Genesis 2:24** For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. **read ›**

24 **Exodus 1:21** And because the midwives feared God, they made households for themselves. **read ›**

25 **Exodus 21:7** And if anyone sells his own daughter as a household slave, she shall not go out as the female slaves go out. **read ›**

26 **Numbers 30:8** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

27 **Numbers 30:9** The vow of a widow or of a divorced woman, whatever she vows concerning her soul, shall remain on her. (Septuagint Numbers 30:10 (Numbers 30:9 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

28 **Numbers 30:11** and her husband hears, and keeps silent toward her, and does not refuse her, then all her vows shall stand, and all her obligations with which she has bound her soul shall stand against her. (Septuagint Numbers 30:12 (Numbers 30:11 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

29 **Numbers 30:12** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

30 **Numbers 30:14** But if he keeps entirely silent toward her from day to day, then he confirms for her all her vows; and the obligations that are on her he confirms for her, because he kept silent toward her on the day he heard. (Septuagint Numbers 30:15 (Numbers 30:14 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

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31 **Numbers 30:16** These are the ordinances that the Lord commanded Moses, between a man and his wife, and between a father and his daughter in her youth in her father's house. (Septuagint Numbers 30:17 (Numbers 30:16 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

32 **Deuteronomy 24:1** If anyone takes a wife and lives with her, and it comes about that she does not find favor in his eyes because he has found some indecent thing in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hands, and sends her out of his house, **read ›**

33 **Deuteronomy 28:56** And the tender and pampered woman among you, whose foot has never ventured to step on the ground because she is so pampered and tender, shall look with a grudging eye on the husband she holds close, and on her son and her daughter, **read ›**

34 **Ezra 4:20** And mighty kings have been in Jerusalem, ruling over all the land beyond the River, and full tribute and a share were given to them. **read ›**

35 **Psalms 7:14** Behold, he has been in labor with unrighteousness; he has conceived trouble and brought forth iniquity. (Septuagint Psalm 7:15 (Psalm 7:14 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

36 **Psalms 128:3** Your wife shall be like a thriving vine on the sides of your house; your sons like young olive plants all around your table. (Septuagint Psalm 127:3 (Psalm 128:3 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

37 **Proverbs 31:28** And her acts of mercy have raised up her children, and they have become rich, and her husband has praised her. **read ›**

38 **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 ›**

39 **Isaiah 16:1** I will send, as it were, creeping things upon the land. Is not the mountain of the daughter of Zion a desolate rock? **read ›**

40 **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 ›**

41 **1 Esdras 4:20** A man leaves his own father who brought him up, and his own country, and clings to his own wife, **read ›**

42 **1 Esdras 4:25** And a man loves his own wife more than father and mother. **read ›**

43 **Tobit 7:14** And he called Edna his wife; and taking a scroll, he wrote a contract and sealed it. **read ›**

44 **Wisdom of Solomon 6:17** For her truest beginning is the desire for discipline, and care for discipline is love, **read ›**

45 **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 ›**

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

47 **Wisdom of Sirach 3:9** For the blessing of a father establishes the houses of children, but the curse of a mother uproots foundations. **read ›**

48 **Wisdom of Sirach 25:1** In three things I was made beautiful, and I stood up in beauty before the Lord and men: harmony among brothers, and friendship among neighbors, and a wife and husband who suit each other. **read ›**

49 **Wisdom of Sirach 25:22** There is anger and shamelessness and great disgrace if a wife supports her husband. **read ›**

50 **Wisdom of Sirach 30:13** Discipline your son and work with him, so that he does not stumble in your shame. And do not overlook his acts of ignorance. Bend his neck in his youth. Concerning Health **read ›**

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

52 **Wisdom of Sirach 42:10** in her virginity, lest she be defiled and become pregnant in her father's house; when with a husband, lest she transgress, and when married, lest she be barren. **read ›**

53 **Susanna 1:3** Her parents were righteous and had taught their daughter according to the law of Moses. **read ›**

54 **2 Maccabees 14:25** Nicanor urged Judas to marry and have children; Judas married, settled down, and shared in the common life. **read ›**

55 **2 Maccabees 15:18** For their anxiety for wives and children, and also for brothers and relatives, weighed less with them; but the greatest and first fear was for the consecrated temple. **read ›**

56 **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 ›**

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57 **4 Maccabees 15:13** O holy nature and parental love, tender toward parents, and nurture, and unconquerable passions of mothers! **read ›**

58 **4 Maccabees 16:1** If, then, even a woman, and an aged one, and the mother of seven sons, endured seeing the tortures of her children even to death, then beyond dispute devout reason is sovereign over the passions. **read ›**

59 **Luke 12:14** But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or an arbitrator over you?” **read ›**

60 **1 Corinthians 7:14** For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. **read ›**

61 **Ephesians 5:22** Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. **read ›**

62 **Ephesians 6:4** You fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but nurture them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. **read ›**

63 **Colossians 1:3** We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, always praying for you, **read ›**

64 **1 Timothy 3:4** one who rules his own house well, having children in subjection with all reverence; **read ›**

65 **1 Timothy 3:5** but if someone does not know how to rule his own house, how will he care for the church of God? **read ›**

66 **1 Timothy 3:12** Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. **read ›**

67 **1 Timothy 5:14** Therefore I desire that the younger women marry, bear children, manage the household, and give the adversary no occasion for reviling. **read ›**

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

69 **Titus 2:4** that they may train the young wives to love their husbands, to love their children, **read ›**

70 **Titus 2:5** to be sober-minded, pure, keepers of the home, good, subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God may not be blasphemed. **read ›**

71 **1 Peter 3:1** Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some disobey the word, they will be won without a word through their wives’ conduct, **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *114 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.

Genesis 4:25

Exodus 32:32

Leviticus 15:18

Deuteronomy 8:18 · 20:5 · 20:19

Job 1:21

Psalms 44:21

Proverbs 9:17

Isaiah 50:9 · 66:2

Jeremiah 23:24

Matthew 5:28 · 5:31 · 5:32 · 5:42 · 6:19 · 6:24 · 6:34 · 7:21 · 10:19 · 12:36 · 13:27 · 18:20 · 19:3 · 19:6 · 19:9 · 22:39 · 23:9 · 24:5

Mark 8:38

Luke 6:30 · 6:46 · 14:11 · 16:15 · 16:18 · 20:25 · 20:27 · 20:34 · 21:14

John 3:6 · 6:27 · 7:37 · 14:6 · 15:1 · 15:12 · 21:17

Acts 20:29

Romans 7:4 · 7:12 · 14:19 · 14:21

1 Corinthians 3:2 · 6:12 · 6:18 · 7:1 · 7:5 · 7:8 · 7:9 · 7:10 · 7:11 · 7:32 · 7:39 · 10:33 · 11:3 · 11:23 · 12:3 · 15:22

2 Corinthians 11:3 · 11:23

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Galatians 1:10 · 5:13 · 5:17
Ephesians 4:25 · 4:26 · 4:27 · 5:1 · 6:1 · 6:11
Philippians 1:23 · 4:3
Colossians 2:20
1 Thessalonians 4:3 · 5:12 · 5:17
2 Thessalonians 3:6 · 3:14
1 Timothy 2:2 · 2:4 · 3:1 · 3:2 · 3:6 · 4:1 · 4:3 · 5:5 · 5:9 · 5:21 · 6:7 · 6:10
2 Timothy 2:3
Titus 2:3 · 2:12
Hebrews 2:10 · 5:11 · 11:13 · 12:14 · 13:4 · 13:5 · 13:14 · 13:17
1 Peter 1:6 · 2:9 · 3:6
Revelation 2:5

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

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “What did the early Christians teach about marriage and raising children?” on April 13, 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.

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How to cite this study. The Historic Faith, “What did the early Christians teach about marriage and raising children?” Early Church Questions, published November 9, 2026, https://thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-did-the-early-christians-teach-about-marriage-and-raising-children. To cite one quotation, add its number and source, for example “quote 1, source 2.”

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THE END OF THIS STUDY