THE QUESTION

# What were the duties of elders and bishops in the early church?

*Asked by a THF member on July 28, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 11 numbered quotations · the 33 early Christian passages and 172 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.*

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-were-the-duties-of-elders-and-bishops-in-the-early-church

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

Elders and bishops were shepherds. They taught the true faith, led baptism and the Eucharist, visited the sick, brought back those who wandered, cared for widows, orphans and the poor, welcomed guests, and corrected sin fairly. The bishop led the church, ordained and judged, while the presbyters served as his council and helped teach and bless.

| | |
|---|---|
| **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 | Elders seek the lost and visit the sick | 2 | 6 | Leaders judge fairly and keep clean hands | 5 |
| 2 | Bishops open their homes to the needy | 2 | 7 | They heal and restore the fallen | 5 |
| 3 | They teach and guard the true faith | 3 | | What these passages don't tell us | 6 |
| 4 | The bishop leads baptism and the Eucharist | 3 | | The Sources: 33 early Christian passages and 172 Bible verses, with links | 6 |
| 5 | Presbyters counsel the bishop and bless | 4 | | | |


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

POINT 1 OF 7

## Elders seek the lost and visit the sick

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

Polycarp gives the presbyters a plain job list. They are to show mercy to everyone, go after those who wander away, visit every sick person, and never neglect widows, orphans or the poor. Their care reaches the whole flock, not just the strong.

**1**

> “And let the presbyters be compassionate and merciful to everyone, bringing back those who wander, visiting all the sick, and not neglecting the widow, the orphan, or the poor, but always "providing for that which is becoming in the sight of God and man;" abstaining from all wrath, favoritism, and unjust judgment; keeping far from all covetousness, not quickly believing an evil report against anyone, not severe in judgment, as knowing that we are all under a debt of sin.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Polycarp,** *Epistle to the Philippians* (c. 100–155 AD) **Source 10, page 7** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

POINT 2 OF 7

## Bishops open their homes to the needy

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

Hermas praises bishops who gladly took God's servants into their homes without pretending. They used their office to care for widows and the needy, and lived holy lives. He says such men are honored before God.

**2**

> “From the tenth mountain, where there were trees shading certain sheep, these are the ones who believed: bishops who were hospitable, who always gladly welcomed the servants of God into their homes without pretending. 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*

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

POINT 3 OF 7

## They teach and guard the true faith

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

Irenaeus says faithful presbyters keep the faith in one Creator God and deepen love for the Son. They explain the Scriptures safely. The Apostolic Constitutions add that leaders must be able to teach and handle the Lord's teaching rightly.

**3** “For they also preserve our faith in one God who created all things, and they enhance our love for the Son of God, who accomplished such marvelous acts for our sake. They explain the Scriptures to us without danger, neither blaspheming God, nor dishonoring the patriarchs, nor despising the prophets.”

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

**4** “First, appoint bishops worthy of the Lord, and presbyters and deacons: men who are godly, righteous, gentle, free from the love of money, lovers of truth, approved, holy, not showing partiality, able to teach the word of godliness, and rightly dividing the doctrines of the Lord, as in”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 22, page 8** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

POINT 4 OF 7

## The bishop leads baptism and the Eucharist

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

Ignatius says the Eucharist is to be led by the bishop or by someone he appoints, and baptism and the love-feast are not held without him. The Apostolic Constitutions add that the bishop lays on hands, ordains and offers.

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

**5** “Consider that to be a proper Eucharist which is administered by the bishop or by someone he has entrusted it to.”

*later in the same passage*

“It is not lawful without the bishop to either baptize or celebrate a love-feast; but whatever he approves of is also pleasing to God, so that everything done may be secure and valid.”

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

**6** “A bishop gives the blessing, but does not receive the blessing. He lays on hands, ordains, offers, and receives the blessing from bishops, but never from presbyters.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 23, page 8** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

POINT 5 OF 7

# Presbyters counsel the bishop and bless

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

Ignatius calls the presbyters a sacred council that advises the bishop. The Apostolic Constitutions say a presbyter blesses and lays on hands but does not ordain. He cannot remove clergy, but he may set apart those under him who deserve it.

**7** “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 7** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

**8** “He lays on hands, but does not ordain. He does not remove from office, yet he does separate those under him if they are liable to such a punishment.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 23, page 8** 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 6 OF 7

## Leaders judge fairly and keep clean hands

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

Polycarp tells presbyters to avoid anger, favoritism and unfair judgment, and not to believe gossip quickly. The Apostolic Constitutions warn that a bishop who takes bribes or plays favorites cannot judge anyone else. Correction only works when the leader's own life is clean.

**9** “And let the presbyters be compassionate and merciful to everyone, bringing back those who wander, visiting all the sick, and not neglecting the widow, the orphan, or the poor, but always "providing for that which is becoming in the sight of God and man;" abstaining from all wrath, favoritism, and unjust judgment; keeping far from all covetousness, not quickly believing an evil report against anyone, not severe in judgment, as knowing that we are all under a debt of sin.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Polycarp,** *Epistle to the Philippians* (c. 100–155 AD) **Source 10, page 7** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

**10** “But if the bishop himself is an offender, how will he still be able to bring another person's offense to judgment?”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 24, page 8** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

POINT 7 OF 7

## They heal and restore the fallen

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

The Apostolic Constitutions describe the bishop as a healer of souls. He teaches those weak in faith because of doubt, and comforts and corrects those wounded by sin, so they can be brought back whole to the Church.

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

**11** “He must heal what is sick, that is, cure by instruction the one who is weak in the faith because of doubt. He must bind up what is broken, that is, bind up with comforting admonitions the one who has gone astray, or has been wounded, bruised, or broken by sins and put out of the way.”

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

**Source 21, page 8** Read it in the library ›

THE LIMITS

## What these passages don’t tell us

- No single passage gives a full job list; these duties are gathered from several writers.
- The passages do not settle how every church today should divide these tasks between its leaders.
- 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 33 early Christian passages and 172 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–33, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 34–117, in Bible order), then 88 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 *33 passages from 14 writers*

**Didache**, *c. 50–120 AD · source 1*

**1** *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 4 (1885 English; on point 3) 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 · sources 2–4*

**2** *Shepherd* (1885 English) “square white stones which fitted exactly into each other, are apostles, bishops, teachers, and deacons, who have lived in godly purity, and have acted as bishops and teachers and deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

**3** *Shepherd* (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** “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 ›**

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

**4** *Shepherd* (on point 1) and if none of you has perished. But if He finds any of these sheep wandering away, woe to the shepherds! And if the shepherds themselves have wandered away, what… [continues online] **read ›**

### **Ignatius of Antioch**, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 5–9*

**5** *Epistle to the Trallians* **Quote 7, page 4** "but upon him who is humble and quiet and trembles at my words?" Also, you should reverence your bishop as Christ Himself, according to the instructions of the blessed apostles… [continues online] **read ›**

**6** *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 ›**

**7** *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* **Quote 5, page 4** 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 ›**

**8** *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 ›**

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

### **Polycarp**, *c. 100–155 AD · source 10*

**10** *Epistle to the Philippians* (1885 English) **Quotes 1, 9, pages 2, 5** "let the presbyters be compassionate and merciful to all, bringing back those that wander, visiting all the sick, and not neglecting the widow, the orphan, or the poor, but always… [continues online] **read ›**

### **Irenaeus**, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 11–12*

**11** *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English; on point 3) "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 ›**

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

### **Tertullian**, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 13–16*

**13** *On Exhortation to Chastity* 7 (1885 English) "truly is this the case, that unless the laics as well observe the rules which are to guide the choice of presbyters, how will there be presbyters at all, who… [continues online] **read ›**

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

**15** *On Monogamy* 12 persons, he does not prescribe to all." Does it then also follow that he does not prescribe to bishops alone what he does enjoin upon all, if what he does… [continues online] **read ›**

**16** *De Fuga in Persecutione* 13 (1885 English) "the apostles, with so much foresight, make the office of overseer of this type, that the occupants might be able to enjoy their rule free from anxiety, under color of… [continues online] **read ›**

### **Hippolytus**, *c. 200–236 AD · source 17*

**17** *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 ›**

### **Origen**, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 18–19*

**18** *Commentary on Matthew* 14 (1885 English) "laying down the law in regard to bishops in the first Epistle to Timothy, he says, If a man seeks the office of a bishop, he desires a good work… [continues online] **read ›**

**19** *Against Celsus* 48 (on point 3) It is clear, further, that among the characteristic qualifications of those who are called bishops, Paul, in describing what kind of man the bishop ought to be, lays down as… [continues online] **read ›**

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

**Cyprian**, *c. 248–258 AD · source 20*

**20** *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 7) “For what is a greater or a more worthy care of overseers, than to provide by diligent solicitude and wholesome medicine for cherishing and preserving the sheep… [continues online] **read ›**

**Apostolic Constitutions**, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 21–27*

**21** *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 11, page 6** “for a good shepherd, let the lay person honor him, love him, and respect him as his lord, as his master, as the high priest of God, and as a… [continues online] **read ›**

**22** *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) **Quote 4, page 3** “Do you first ordain bishops worthy of the Lord, and presbyters and deacons, pious men, righteous, meek, free from the love of money, lovers of truth, approved, holy, not accepters… [continues online] **read ›**

**23** *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quotes 6, 8, page 4** 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 ›**

**24** *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) **Quote 10, page 5** “therefore, we neglect to separate the transgressor from the Church of God, we shall make the Lord's house a den of thieves… [continues online] **read ›**

**25** *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) “Let not the presbyters and deacons do anything without the consent of the bishop, for it is he who is entrusted with the people of the Lord, and will be… [continues online] **read ›**

**26** *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 ›**

**27** *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 6) this, you bishops; and hear this, you of the laity, how God speaks: "I will judge between ram and ram, and between sheep and sheep." And He says to the… [continues online] **read ›**

**Archelaus**, *c. 270–300 AD · source 28*

**28** *Disputation with Manes* 1 “is, the foundation 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… [continues online] **read ›**

**Peter of Alexandria**, *c. 300–311 AD · source 29*

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

**Anonymous** · *sources 30–31*

**30** *Treatise on Re-Baptism* 1 (on point 4) this is found to be so, what do you think, my brother? If a man is not baptized by a bishop in such a way as to receive the laying… [continues online] **read ›**

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

**Clement of Rome** · *sources 32–33*

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

**33** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English) “are of opinion, therefore, that those appointed by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole Church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of… [continues online] **read ›**

**THE BIBLE** *84 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

**34** **Exodus 18:20** And you shall solemnly charge them with the statutes of God and his law, and show them the ways in which they must walk and the works they must do. **read ›**

**35** **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 ›**

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

36 **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 ›**

37 **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 ›**

38 **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 ›**

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

40 **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 ›**

41 **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 ›**

42 **1 Chronicles 23:28** for he appointed them at the side of Aaron, to minister in the house of the Lord, over the courts, and over the chambers, and over the purification of all the holy things, and over the works of the service of the house of God; **read ›**

43 **1 Chronicles 23:32** And they shall keep the charges of the tabernacle of witness, and the charge of the holy place, and the charges of the sons of Aaron their brothers, to minister in the house of the Lord. **read ›**

44 **2 Chronicles 19:10** Whatever case comes to you from your brothers who dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between statute and commandment, ordinances and judgments, you shall instruct them, and they shall not sin against the Lord, and anger shall not come upon you and upon your brothers. Thus you shall do, and you shall not sin. **read ›**

45 **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 ›**

46 **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 ›**

47 **2 Chronicles 35:2** He set the priests in their charges and strengthened them for the works of the house of the Lord. **read ›**

48 **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 ›**

49 **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 ›**

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

51 **Ezra 8:12** of the sons of Azgad, Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him one hundred and ten males; **read ›**

52 **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 ›**

53 **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 ›**

54 **Proverbs 16:24** Good words are honeycombs, and their sweetness is healing for the soul. **read ›**

55 **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 ›**

56 **Ecclesiastes 4:14** For he will come out of the house of the prisoners to reign, for even in his kingdom he became poor. **read ›**

57 **Isaiah 40:11** Like a shepherd he will shepherd his flock, and with his arm he will gather the lambs, and he will comfort those that are with young. **read ›**

58 **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 ›**

59 **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 ›**

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

60 **Amos 6:4** who sleep on beds of ivory, and live in luxury on their couches, and eat young goats from the flocks and calves still nursing from the midst of the herds, **read ›**

61 **1 Esdras 1:2** having set the priests in their robes by their daily courses in the temple of the Lord. **read ›**

62 **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 ›**

63 **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 ›**

64 **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 ›**

65 **1 Esdras 7:2** supervised the holy works very carefully, working together with the elders of the Jews and the temple officials. **read ›**

66 **1 Esdras 8:12** that they may look into the affairs of Judea and Jerusalem in keeping with what is in the law of the Lord, **read ›**

67 **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 ›**

68 **1 Esdras 8:59** Keep watch and guard them until you deliver them to the chiefs of the priests and the Levites and to the leaders of the families of Israel in Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of our God." **read ›**

69 **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 ›**

70 **Judith 8:24** And now, brothers, let us show our brothers that their life hangs on us, and that the sanctuary and the house and the altar rest upon us. **read ›**

71 **Wisdom of Solomon 6:4** Because, though you were servants of his kingdom, you did not judge rightly, nor keep the law, nor walk according to the purpose of God, **read ›**

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

73 **Wisdom of Sirach 44:4** leaders of the people by their counsels, and by understanding of the people's learning; wise words were in their instruction; **read ›**

74 **Letter of Jeremiah 1:31** And in their houses the priests sit with their tunics torn, and their heads and beards shaved, and their heads uncovered. **read ›**

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

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

77 **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 ›**

78 **1 Maccabees 16:24** behold, these are written in the book of the days of his high priesthood, from the time he became high priest after his father. **read ›**

79 **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 ›**

80 **2 Maccabees 4:14** that the priests were no longer eager for the services of the altar; but despising the temple and neglecting the sacrifices, they hurried to take part in the lawless exhibitions in the wrestling arena after the signal for the discus-throwing. **read ›**

81 **1 Enoch 89:18** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

82 **1 Enoch 89:19** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

83 **1 Enoch 89:22** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

84 **1 Enoch 89:29** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

85 **1 Enoch 89:30** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

86 **1 Enoch 89:33** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

87 **1 Enoch 89:36** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

88 **1 Enoch 89:38** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

89 **1 Enoch 89:45** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

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

90 **1 Enoch 89:49** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
91 **1 Enoch 89:53** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
92 **1 Enoch 89:59** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
93 **1 Enoch 90:2** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
94 **1 Enoch 90:22** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
95 **1 Enoch 90:38** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
96 **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 ›**
97 **Luke 11:16** Others, testing him, sought from him a sign from heaven. **read ›**
98 **John 10:2** But one who enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. **read ›**
99 **John 10:12** He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming, leaves the sheep, and flees. The wolf snatches the sheep and scatters them. **read ›**
100 **Acts 9:14** Here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.” **read ›**
101 **Acts 13:8** But Elymas the sorcerer—for that is how his name is translated—opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. **read ›**
102 **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 ›**
103 **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 ›**
104 **Romans 3:15** their feet are swift to shed blood; **read ›**
105 **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 ›**
106 **1 Timothy 3:1** The saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a good work. **read ›**
107 **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 ›**
108 **1 Timothy 5:1** Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father; the younger men as brothers; **read ›**
109 **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 ›**
110 **1 Timothy 5:19** Do not receive an accusation against an elder except at the word of two or three witnesses. **read ›**
111 **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 ›**
112 **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 ›**
113 **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 ›**
114 **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 ›**
115 **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 ›**
116 **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 ›**
117 **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 *88 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

**Leviticus** 19:15

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

**Proverbs** 22:6 · 31:20
**Song of Solomon** 2:16
**Isaiah** 1:15 · 1:17 · 60:17 · 63:3
**Jeremiah** 1:5
**Matthew** 4:10 · 5:6 · 5:9 · 5:17 · 5:42 · 6:12 · 9:2 · 9:12 · 10:5 · 18:3 · 18:12 · 19:14 · 20:25 · 21:13 · 24:11
**Mark** 5:34 · 7:9 · 9:50 · 13:35
**Luke** 5:20 · 6:41 · 8:18 · 10:16 · 11:23 · 12:35 · 12:47 · 12:50 · 15:4 · 16:9 · 19:10
**John** 10:11 · 20:22
**Acts** 1:8 · 4:32
**Romans** 1:17 · 2:13 · 12:17 · 14:10 · 14:12 · 15:27
**1 Corinthians** 1:26 · 6:10 · 9:25 · 15:6
**2 Corinthians** 5:10 · 8:21
**Galatians** 3:11 · 3:27 · 5:9
**Ephesians** 2:20 · 4:2 · 4:5 · 4:11 · 6:5 · 6:9
**Philippians** 1:18 · 2:2 · 3:16
**Colossians** 3:22 · 3:25 · 4:1
**1 Timothy** 3:12 · 5:9
**2 Timothy** 2:15 · 4:6
**Titus** 1:6 · 1:9
**Hebrews** 6:6 · 10:38 · 13:7
**James** 2:13 · 5:14 · 5:16
**1 Peter** 1:17 · 2:5
**1 John** 2:27
**Revelation** 1:6 · 22:18

© 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 “What were the duties of elders and bishops in the early church?” on July 28, 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, “What were the duties of elders and bishops in the early church?” Early Church Questions, published November 9, 2026, https://thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-were-the-duties-of-elders-and-bishops-in-the-early-church. 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