THE QUESTION

When should church leaders show mercy, and when should they hold people accountable?

Asked by a THF member on October 18, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 10 numbered quotations · the 25 early Christian passages and 157 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/when-should-church-leaders-show-mercy-and-when-should-they-hold-people

The short answer *Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words*

The early church taught that leaders must do both at once. They should be merciful, slow to believe accusations, and eager to bring wanderers back. But they must also rebuke sin and, if someone refuses correction, put him outside for a time. The goal is always healing, and anyone who truly repents is received again.

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

Leaders should be merciful to everyone

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

Polycarp tells the elders to be kind to all and to go after those who wander. He reminds them that they too are sinners who need forgiveness, so they must not be harsh judges.

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 2, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 8

Check accusations carefully before acting

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

The Apostolic Constitutions tell the bishop not to convict anyone without three trusted witnesses. He must also ask whether the accusers are driven by envy or ill will, since some people enjoy doing harm.

2 “Do not accept fewer witnesses to convict anyone than three, and let them be men of known and established reputation. Ask whether they are accusing out of ill will or envy.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 18, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 3 OF 8

Sin must be rebuked, but to heal

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

The bishop is told to correct those who need it. But every rebuke has a goal: to bring the person to shame and change, not to crush him. Clement of Alexandria likewise says rebuking means bringing someone back to his senses.

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3 “He must reprove, but not strike; bring them low so that they may be ashamed, but not ruin them; warn them so that they may be converted; and rebuke them so that they may be reformed and live better lives.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 19, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

4 “So rebuking means bringing a person back to his or her senses.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 1.10 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 8, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 8

Correct one another in peace, not anger

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

The Didache asks for gentle, truthful leaders and tells believers to correct one another calmly, following the Gospel. It also says a person who wrongs another should be shut out of fellowship until he repents.

5 “And correct one another, not in anger but in peace, as you have it in the Gospel, Matthew 18:15-17. But if anyone acts wrongly against another, let no one speak to him, and let him hear nothing from you until he repents.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Didache,** *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 15 (c. 50–120 AD) **Source 1, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 5 OF 8

Refusing correction leads to being put out

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

Following the steps Jesus gave, the Apostolic Constitutions say that a person who will not listen even to the church is treated as an outsider. Yet the same passage says that if he is willing to repent, he should be received.

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6 “But if anyone hardens himself, tell it to the church. But if he refuses to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen man and a tax collector, Matthew 18:17, and no longer receive him into the church as a Christian, but reject him as a heathen.”

later in the same passage

“But if he is willing to repent, receive him.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** **Source 24, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
(c. 250–380 AD)
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 8

Judge firmly, yet welcome the repentant

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

The bishop is to rebuke sinners and warn the stubborn, but he must also receive those who repent. The reason given is that God is merciful and has promised forgiveness to all who turn back.

7 “Therefore, O bishop, judge with authority like God, yet receive those who repent, for God is a God of mercy. Rebuke those who sin. Warn those who have not turned back.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** **Source 23, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
(c. 250–380 AD)
THF's updated English

POINT 7 OF 8

Discipline lasts a set time, then restoration

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

Even when an offender is sent out, the deacons are to look for him and plead for him. After a time of fasting that fits the offense, the church receives him back like a father receiving a child.

8 “Therefore, when offenders profess their repentance, we also ought to do this with them: separate them for a fixed time, in proportion to their offense, and afterward, like fathers receiving children, receive them again when they repent.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** **Source 20, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
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POINT 8 OF 8

Do not be quick to cut off

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

The Apostolic Constitutions warn leaders against being fast to expel but slow to forgive. Cyprian says the same balance: show firm rebuke to sinners while still giving mercy to raise up the fallen.

9 "For it is not right to be too quick in casting out an offender, but slow in receiving him when he returns; quick to cut off, but unmerciful when he is sorrowful and ought to be healed."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) *THF's updated English* **Source 18, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**

10 "So we show the rebuke of firmness to sinners in such a way that, nevertheless, we do not refuse the medicine of divine goodness and mercy when raising up the fallen and healing the wounded."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Epistles* (c. 248–258 AD) *THF's updated English* **Source 13, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**

THE LIMITS

What these passages don't tell us

- These passages describe how leaders should treat sin in the church, not how to handle crimes under civil law.
- They do not list which sins call for which length of discipline.
- 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 25 early Christian passages and 157 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–25, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 26–138, in Bible order), then 44 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).

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"… [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 *25 passages from 9 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · source 1*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 15 (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 3** "18:15-17 but to every one that acts amiss against another, let no one speak, nor let him hear anything from you until he repents… [continues online] **read ›**

Polycarp, *c. 100–155 AD · source 2*

2 *Epistle to the Philippians* **Quote 1, page 2** "severe in judgment, as knowing that we are all under a debt of sin… [continues online] **read ›**

Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · source 3*

3 *Diatessaron* 27 (on point 6) "his brother's wrong conduct from his heart. Take heed within yourselves: if your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he acts wrongly toward… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 4–8*

4 *Instructor* 1.9 (1885 English; on point 3) "is the bringing forward of sin, laying it before one… [continues online] **read ›**

5 *Instructor* 1.8 (on point 3) But an enemy does it with contempt, while a friend does it with kindness. So the Lord does not rebuke people out of hatred. He Himself suffered for us, though… [continues online] **read ›**

6 *Instructor* 3.12 (on point 6) "about forbearance. "If your brother sins against you," it says, "rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and turns… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Instructor* 1.9 (1885 English; on point 3) "reproof and rebuke, as also the original term implies, are the stripes of the soul, chastizing sins, preventing death, and leading to self-control those carried away to licentiousness… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Instructor* 1.10 (1885 English) **Quote 4, page 3** "that rebuking is bringing one to one's senses… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 9–11*

9 *On Modesty* 15 "by his restoration to concorporate unity with the Church, righteousness is made to have fellowship with iniquity, darkness has communion with light, Belial is… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *On Modesty* 19 "with the view of ceasing from adultery, not, however, in the prospect of restoration to church fellowship as well… [continues online] **read ›**

11 *On Modesty* 20 (1885 English) "discipline, therefore, of the apostles properly (so called), indeed, instructs and determinately directs, as a principal point, the overseer of all sanctity as regards the temple of God to the… [continues online] **read ›**

Dionysius of Alexandria, *c. 232–265 AD · source 12*

12 *Epistles and Epistolary Fragments* (1885 English; on point 7) "rule and form I have received from our blessed Father Heraclus: For you, who came from heresies, even if they had fallen away from the Church, much rather if they… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 13–16*

13 *Epistles* (1885 English) **Quote 10, page 5** "matter, dearest brother, it is our business to advise for and to aid in, since we who consider the divine clemency, and hold the balance in governingthe Church, do thus… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Epistles* (1885 English) "this is suitable to the modesty and the discipline, and even the life of all of us, that the chief officers meeting together with the clergy in the presence also… [continues online] **read ›**

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15 *Epistles* (on point 6) kindness, and repents of the evil appointed," Joel 2:12-13. In the Psalms also, we read both the rebuke and the mercy of God. He threatens while at the… [continues online] **read ›**

16 *Epistles* (1885 English) "that an assembly for counsel being gathered together, with bishop, presbyters, deacons, and confessors, as well as with the laity who stand fast, we should deal with the case of… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 17–24*

17 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 2) according to the doctrine of our Lord… [continues online] **read ›**

18 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quotes 2, 9, pages 2, 5** not before their eyes." Now the way of peace is our Savior Jesus Christ, who taught us, saying, "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given… [continues online] **read ›**

19 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 3** "that is, but not striking; beating them down to make them ashamed, but not overthrowing them… [continues online] **read ›**

20 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) **Quote 8, page 4** "if upon examination you find that he is penitent, and fit to be received at all into the Church when you have afflicted him his days of fasting, according to… [continues online] **read ›**

21 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 1) him also be merciful, for again it is said: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy… [continues online] **read ›**

22 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 1) merciful, for blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy… [continues online] **read ›**

23 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 7, page 4** bishop, judge with authority like God, yet receive those who repent, for God is a God of mercy. Rebuke those who sin. Warn those who have not turned back. Encourage… [continues online] **read ›**

24 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) **Quote 6, page 4** it to the Church: but if he neglects to hear the Church, let… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome · *source 25*

25 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English; on point 5) "therefore, who laid the foundation of this sedition, submit yourselves to the presbyters, and receive correction so as to repent, bending the knees of your hearts… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *113 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

26 **Leviticus 19:17** You shall not hate your brother in your mind. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and you shall not bear sin because of him. **read ›**

27 **Numbers 5:7** shall confess the sin that he has committed, and shall repay what he owes for the wrong: he shall repay the principal and add its fifth part to it, and shall repay it to the one against whom he trespassed. **read ›**

28 **Numbers 14:18** 'The Lord is long-suffering, great in mercy, and true, taking away lawlessness and unrighteousness and sins; yet he will by no means acquit the guilty, repaying the sins of fathers upon children to the third and fourth generation.' **read ›**

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

30 **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 ›**

31 **Deuteronomy 25:2** then if the ungodly man deserves lashes, you shall lay him down before the judges, and they shall whip him before them according to his ungodliness. **read ›**

32 **1 Kings 8:50** and be gracious to their unrighteousness in which they sinned against you, and with regard to all their transgressions by which they transgressed against you; and you shall give them compassion before those who carry them captive, and they shall have compassion on them; **read ›**

33 **2 Chronicles 7:14** and my people, on whom my name is called, are put to shame, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will be gracious to their sins, and I will heal their land. **read ›**

34 **2 Chronicles 30:19** "May the good Lord be merciful toward every heart that is directed to seek the Lord God of their fathers, though not according to the purity of the sanctuary." **read ›**

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35 **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 ›**

36 **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 ›**

37 **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 ›**

38 **Job 4:3** For whereas you have instructed many, and have strengthened the hands of the weak; **read ›**

39 **Psalms 6:1** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

40 **Psalms 38:1** O Lord, do not rebuke me in your wrath, nor discipline me in your anger. (Septuagint Psalm 37:2 (Psalm 38:1 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

41 **Proverbs 3:11** Son, do not make light of the discipline of the Lord, nor lose heart when you are rebuked by him; **read ›**

42 **Proverbs 3:12** for whom the Lord loves he rebukes, and he whips every son whom he receives. **read ›**

43 **Proverbs 9:7** He who disciplines evil men will get dishonor for himself, and he who rebukes the ungodly will bring blame on himself. **read ›**

44 **Proverbs 13:18** Instruction takes away poverty and dishonor, but he who holds on to correction will be glorified. **read ›**

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

46 **Proverbs 15:10** The instruction of the guileless is known by those who pass by, but those who hate correction die shamefully. **read ›**

47 **Proverbs 15:32** He who rejects instruction hates himself, but he who keeps correction loves his soul. **read ›**

48 **Proverbs 17:10** A threat breaks the heart of a man of sound judgment, but a fool, though whipped, does not perceive. **read ›**

49 **Proverbs 24:25** but those who rebuke will appear better, and blessing will come upon them; **read ›**

50 **Proverbs 28:13** He who covers his own ungodliness will not prosper, but he who sets forth rebukes will be loved. **read ›**

51 **Ecclesiastes 5:20** For he will not much remember the days of his life, because God distracts him with the gladness of his heart. (Septuagint Ecclesiastes 5:19 (Ecclesiastes 5:20 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

52 **Isaiah 14:3** And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord will give you rest from your anguish and your anger, and from your hard slavery, in which you served them. **read ›**

53 **Isaiah 15:3** Wrap yourselves in sackcloth in her squares, and lament on her rooftops and in her lanes; all of you, wail with weeping. **read ›**

54 **Jeremiah 2:12** Heaven was amazed at this, and shuddered very greatly, says the Lord. **read ›**

55 **Jeremiah 37:2** He and his servants and the people of the land did not listen to the words of the Lord which he spoke by the hand of Jeremiah. (Septuagint Jeremiah 44:2 (Jeremiah 37:2 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

56 **Lamentations 1:7** Zain. Jerusalem remembered the days of her humiliation and of her rejection, all her desirable things that were from days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the oppressor, and there was none to help her; her enemies saw it and laughed at her dwelling. **read ›**

57 **Ezekiel 21:4** Because I will destroy out of you the unrighteous and the lawless, therefore my dagger shall go out of its sheath against all flesh from the east to the north, (Septuagint Ezekiel 21:9 (Ezekiel 21:4 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

58 **Daniel 3:11** and does not fall down and worship the golden image, shall be cast into the burning fiery furnace. **read ›**

59 **Daniel 3:12** There are certain Jews whom you appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who have not obeyed your decree, O king; they do not serve your gods, and they do not worship the golden image that you have set up.” **read ›**

60 **Daniel 9:8** In you, O Lord, is our righteousness, and to us belongs shame of face—to our kings and to our rulers and to our fathers—for we have sinned. **read ›**

61 **Daniel 11:17** And he shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall make all things straight with him; and he shall give him a daughter of women to ruin her; but she shall by no means remain, and she shall not be his. **read ›**

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62 **Amos 6:6** who drink strained wine and anoint themselves with the finest ointments, and have suffered nothing over the ruin of Joseph. **read ›**

63 **Zechariah 7:9** Thus says the Lord Almighty: Judge righteous judgment, and show mercy and compassion each one to his brother; **read ›**

64 **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 ›**

65 **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 ›**

66 **Tobit 14:9** But you, keep the law and the statutes, and be merciful and just, that it may go well with you. **read ›**

67 **Judith 4:3** for they had only lately come up from the captivity, and all the people of Judea had recently been gathered together, and the vessels and the altar and the house had been sanctified after the desecration. **read ›**

68 **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 ›**

69 **Wisdom of Solomon 6:6** For the lowliest may be pardoned in mercy, but the mighty will be mightily examined. **read ›**

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

71 **Wisdom of Solomon 12:2** Therefore you correct little by little those who fall away, and warn them by reminding them of the things in which they sin, that being freed from wickedness they may believe in you, O Lord. **read ›**

72 **Wisdom of Solomon 12:19** And through such works you taught your people that the righteous man must love mankind, and you made your sons of good hope, that you give repentance for sins. **read ›**

73 **Wisdom of Solomon 12:22** So while disciplining us, you whip our enemies ten thousand times more, so that when we judge, we may ponder your goodness, and when we are judged, we may expect mercy. **read ›**

74 **Wisdom of Solomon 12:26** But those who were not corrected by playful rebukes will experience a judgment worthy of God. **read ›**

75 **Wisdom of Sirach 8:5** Do not insult a man who turns from sin; remember that we are all under penalty. **read ›**

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

77 **Wisdom of Sirach 11:7** Do not find fault before you examine; understand first, and then rebuke. **read ›**

78 **Wisdom of Sirach 16:11** Even if there is one stiff-necked man, it will be a marvel if he goes unpunished; for mercy and anger come from him; he is mighty in atonements, and pours out anger. **read ›**

79 **Wisdom of Sirach 16:12** As great as his mercy, so great also is his rebuke; he judges a man according to his works. **read ›**

80 **Wisdom of Sirach 17:25** Turn back to the Lord and forsake your sins; make your prayer before his face and lessen your offense. **read ›**

81 **Wisdom of Sirach 18:13** The mercy of man is toward his neighbor, but the mercy of the Lord is upon all flesh, rebuking and disciplining and teaching, and turning them back, as a shepherd his flock. **read ›**

82 **Wisdom of Sirach 18:14** He has mercy on those who accept discipline, and on those who are eager for his judgments. **read ›**

83 **Wisdom of Sirach 19:13** Question a friend; perhaps he did not do it; and if he did anything, so that he will not do it again. **read ›**

84 **Wisdom of Sirach 20:2** How much better it is to rebuke than to be angry, **read ›**

85 **Wisdom of Sirach 21:1** My child, have you sinned? Do not do so again, and pray concerning your former sins. **read ›**

86 **Wisdom of Sirach 21:6** He who hates correction is in the footsteps of the sinner, but he who fears the Lord will turn back in his heart. **read ›**

87 **Wisdom of Sirach 28:4** On a man like himself he has no mercy, and he prays about his own sins! **read ›**

88 **Wisdom of Sirach 32:20** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

89 **Wisdom of Sirach 35:14** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

90 **Wisdom of Sirach 48:10** you were written down for rebukes at the appointed times, to calm anger before wrath, to turn the heart of a father to his son, and to restore the tribes of Jacob. **read ›**

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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 **Baruch 3:2** Hear, O Lord, and have mercy, for we have sinned before you. **read ›**

93 **1 Maccabees 14:19** And these were read before the assembly in Jerusalem. **read ›**

94 **2 Maccabees 5:20** Therefore the place itself, having shared in the misfortunes that happened to the nation, afterward shared in the benefits from the Lord; and what was forsaken in the wrath of the Almighty was restored again in all glory when the great Master was reconciled. **read ›**

95 **2 Maccabees 8:28** After the Sabbath they gave some of the spoils to those who had been tortured and to the widows and orphans, and the rest they divided among themselves and the children. **read ›**

96 **2 Maccabees 8:29** When they had done this, they made a common plea and begged the merciful Lord to be fully reconciled with his slaves. **read ›**

97 **2 Maccabees 12:42** and they turned to pleading, asking that the sin that had been committed might be wholly blotted out. And the noble Judas urged the multitude to keep themselves free from sin, since they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. **read ›**

98 **2 Maccabees 13:12** When they had all done this together and had pleaded with the merciful Lord with weeping and fasting and lying facedown for three days without ceasing, Judas encouraged them and ordered them to stand ready. **read ›**

99 **4 Maccabees 6:28** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

100 **4 Maccabees 14:3** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

101 **4 Maccabees 15:3** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

102 **1 Enoch 1:7** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

103 **1 Enoch 13:6** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

104 **1 Enoch 60:6** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

105 **1 Enoch 95:2** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

106 **Matthew 5:7** Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. **read ›**

107 **Matthew 18:15** “If your brother sins against you, go, show him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained back your brother. **read ›**

108 **Matthew 18:17** If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. **read ›**

109 **Matthew 18:33** Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, just as I had mercy on you?’ **read ›**

110 **Luke 6:36** Therefore be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate. **read ›**

111 **Luke 7:9** When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turned and said to the multitude who followed him, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith, no, not in Israel.” **read ›**

112 **Luke 17:3** Be careful. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him. If he repents, forgive him. **read ›**

113 **Acts 2:42** They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. **read ›**

114 **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 ›**

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

116 **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 ›**

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 2:19** and are confident that you yourself are a guide of the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, **read ›**

119 **Romans 12:8** or he who exhorts, to his exhorting; he who gives, let him do it with generosity; he who rules, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. **read ›**

120 **1 Corinthians 1:16** I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else. **read ›**

121 **1 Corinthians 3:2** I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able to take it. Indeed, even now you are still not able, **read ›**

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122 **1 Corinthians 5:5** that such a one be delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. **read ›**

123 **1 Corinthians 11:32** But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. **read ›**

124 **Galatians 6:1** Brothers, even if a man is caught in some fault, you who are spiritual must restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, looking to yourself so that you also are not tempted. **read ›**

125 **2 Thessalonians 3:6** Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to withdraw from every brother who walks in a disorderly way and not according to the tradition which they received from us. **read ›**

126 **1 Timothy 3:1** The saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a good work. **read ›**

127 **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 ›**

128 **1 Timothy 5:1** Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father; the younger men as brothers; **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 **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 ›**

131 **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 ›**

132 **Hebrews 13:7** Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Considering the outcome of their way of life, imitate their faithfulness. **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 **James 2:13** For judgment is without mercy to him who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. **read ›**

135 **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 ›**

136 **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 ›**

137 **1 Peter 5:3** not as lording it over those entrusted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock. **read ›**

138 **Revelation 3:19** All whom I love, I rebuke and discipline. Therefore be zealous and repent. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *44 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.

Proverbs 1:23

Isaiah 1:4 · 29:13

Matthew 4:10 · 5:5 · 5:8 · 6:12 · 9:2 · 9:12 · 12:36 · 12:37 · 18:12 · 20:25 · 24:11

Mark 5:34

Luke 5:20 · 6:37 · 10:16 · 12:57 · 15:4 · 16:15 · 17:4 · 18:14 · 19:10 · 23:34

John 7:24 · 8:44 · 10:11

Romans 3:15 · 12:17 · 14:10 · 14:12

1 Corinthians 9:6 · 15:11

2 Corinthians 4:1 · 5:10 · 6:16 · 7:1 · 8:21 · 12:21

1 Timothy 3:4

Hebrews 6:1

James 5:14

Revelation 2:18

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

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “When should church leaders show mercy, and when should they hold people accountable?” on October 18, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY