THE QUESTION

Who guided and led the early church?

Asked by a THF member on May 18, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 12 numbered quotations · the 43 early Christian passages and 197 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/who-guided-and-led-the-early-church

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

The early writers say Christ sent the apostles, and the apostles, guided by the Holy Spirit, appointed bishops and deacons. Those leaders were followed by approved successors. Bishops, presbyters and deacons led each local church in order, while the people took part by approving their leaders and by keeping the apostles' teaching.

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.

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POINT 1 OF 7

Christ sent the apostles, as God sent Christ

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

Clement of Rome traces the church's guidance back to God. God sent Christ, and Christ sent the apostles. He says this was done in an orderly way, and that the apostles went out fully assured by the resurrection and by the Holy Spirit.

1

"The apostles have preached the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ has done so from God. Christ was therefore sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ."

later in the same passage

"Having received their orders, and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established in the word of God, with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 40, page 9** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 7

The apostles appointed bishops and deacons

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

Clement says the apostles tested their first converts by the Spirit and made them bishops and deacons. The Didache tells churches to appoint worthy bishops and deacons, and describes the kind of men they must be.

2

"Thus, preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits of their labors, having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who would later believe."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 40, page 9** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

3

"Therefore, appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons who are worthy of the Lord: men who are gentle, not lovers of money, truthful, and proven."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Didache,** *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 15 (c. 50–120 AD) **Source 1, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
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POINT 3 OF 7

Approved men succeeded the first leaders

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

Clement says the apostles planned ahead for after their first appointees died: other approved men would take their place. Irenaeus gives an example, saying the apostles handed the office of bishop in Rome to Linus, and others followed him in turn.

4 “For this reason, considering that they had obtained perfect foreknowledge of this, they appointed the ministers previously mentioned, and subsequently instructed that when these ministers passed away, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 41, page 9** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

5 “The blessed apostles, having established and built up the Church, entrusted the role of the episcopate to Linus.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 13, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 7

Bishop, presbyters and deacons led in order

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

Ignatius tells churches to follow the bishop, honor the presbyters as they would the apostles, and respect the deacons. He sets out a clear order in which each group is subject to the one above it.

6 “See that you all follow the bishop, just as Christ Jesus does the Father, and the presbytery as you would the apostles.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 9, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

7 “Presbyters, be subject to the bishop; deacons, to the presbyters; and you, the people, to the presbyters and the deacons.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistles of Ignatius* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 8, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

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POINT 5 OF 7

Succession kept the apostles' teaching safe

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

Irenaeus links obeying the presbyters with their succession from the apostles and the gift of truth. Origen says the church's teaching was handed down in order from the apostles and was still kept in the churches of his day.

8 “Therefore, it is necessary to obey the presbyters in the Church—those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, along with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gift of truth, according to the good pleasure of the Father.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 15, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

9 “In the same way, since there are many who think they hold the opinions of Christ, and yet some of them think differently from those before them, the teaching of the Church, handed down in orderly succession from the apostles and remaining in the Churches to the present day, is still preserved.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *De Principiis (On First Principles)* (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 22, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 7

The Holy Spirit was given to the Church

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

Novatian says the Holy Spirit was promised to the Church and then given. He adds that the same Spirit hands out different offices for different times, so the church's ministries come from him.

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10

"Moreover, the order of reason and the authority of the faith, in the arrangement of the words and in the Lord's Scriptures, urge us after these things to believe also in the Holy Spirit, once promised to the Church and given at the appointed times."

later in the same passage

"Rather, He is one and the same, distributing His offices according to the times, the occasions, and the impulses of things."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Novatian,** *Treatise Concerning the Trinity* 29 (c. 240–258 AD) **Source 24, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 7 OF 7

The people helped choose their leaders

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

The Apostolic Constitutions say a new bishop should be chosen by all the people, who gather with the clergy and give their consent. Clement also speaks of leaders appointed with the consent of the whole Church.

11

"He must be an excellent man, chosen by all the people. When he has been named and approved, let the people gather on the Lord's Day, together with the presbytery and the bishops who are present, and let them give their consent."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 32, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

12

"We believe, therefore, that those appointed by them, or later by other distinguished men with the consent of the whole Church, who have served the flock of Christ blamelessly in a humble, peaceful, and selfless spirit, and have long enjoyed a good reputation with everyone, cannot be justly removed from the ministry."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 41, page 9** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don't tell us

- These passages describe how leaders were chosen and honored, but they do not list every duty of each office.

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- They do not say exactly when one bishop over each local church became the normal pattern everywhere.
- 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 43 early Christian passages and 197 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–43, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 44–143, in Bible order), then 97 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 *43 passages from 18 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · source 1*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 15 (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 2** "appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek, and not lovers of money, 1 Timothy 3:4 and truthful and proven… [continues online] **read ›**

Mathetes, *c. 80–200 AD · source 2*

2 *Epistle to Diognetus* (on point 6) "whom the Church is enriched, and grace, widely spread, increases in the saints, furnishing understanding, revealing mysteries, announcing times, rejoicing over the faithful, giving… [continues online] **read ›**

Hermas, *c. 90–150 AD · source 3*

3 *Shepherd* (on point 4) "listen about the stones in the building. Those square white stones that fit exactly together are apostles, bishops, teachers, and deacons. They have lived in godly purity, and they have… [continues online] **read ›**

Papias, *c. 95–130 AD · source 4*

4 *Fragments* (1885 English) "presbyters, the disciples of the apostles, say that this is the gradation and arrangement of those who are saved, and that they advance through steps of this nature… [continues online] **read ›**

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 5–12*

5 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (on point 4) free." Let governors be obedient to Caesar; soldiers to those that command them; deacons to the presbyters, as to high priests; the presbyters, deacons, and the rest of the clergy… [continues online] **read ›**

6 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (on point 4) "deacons to the presbyters; the presbyters to the bishop… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Epistle to the Trallians* (on point 4) you should reverence your bishop as Christ Himself, according to the instructions of the blessed apostles. He who is within the altar is pure; therefore, he is obedient to the… [continues online] **read ›**

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8 *Epistles of Ignatius* **Quote 7, page 3** “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." Presbyters, be subject to the bishop; deacons, to the presbyters; and you… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (1885 English) **Quote 6, page 3** “that ye all follow the bishop, even as Christ Jesus does the Father, and the presbytery as ye would the apostles… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Epistle to the Magnesians* (on point 4) “being begotten by the Father before the beginning of time, was God the Word, the only-begotten Son, and… [continues online] **read ›**

11 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (1885 English; on point 4) “also the nearest Churches have sent, in some cases bishops, and in others presbyters and deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Epistles of Ignatius* (on point 4) presbyters, "feed the flock which is among you," until God reveals who is to lead you. For "I am now ready to be offered," that I "may win Christ." Let… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 13–15*

13 *Against Heresies: Book III* **Quote 5, page 3** “blessed apostles, having established and built up the Church, entrusted the role of the episcopate to Linus. Paul mentions Linus in the Epistles to Timothy. Anacletus succeeded him, and after… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English; on point 5) “it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its pre-eminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the apostolical… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *Against Heresies: Book IV* **Quote 8, page 4** “it is necessary to obey the presbyters in the Church—those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, along with the succession of the… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 16–17*

16 *Stromata* 6.13 (on point 4) “according to my opinion, the grades here in the Church, of bishops… [continues online] **read ›**

17 *Stromata* 1.1 (1885 English; on point 5) “they preserving the tradition of the blessed doctrine derived directly from the holy apostles, Peter, James, John, and Paul, the sons receiving it from the father (but few were like… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 18–20*

18 *On Prescription Against Heretics* 8 (1885 English; on point 1) “the apostles, who were ordained to be teachers to the Gentiles, were themselves to have the Comforter for their teacher, far more needless was it to say to us, Seek… [continues online] **read ›**

19 *On Prescription Against Heretics* 32 (on point 3) “in the time of the apostles, we can say this: Let them bring out the original records of their churches. Let them unfold the list of their bishops, coming down… [continues online] **read ›**

20 *On Exhortation to Chastity* 7 (1885 English; on point 4) “is the authority of the Church, and the honour which has acquired sanctity through the joint session of the Order, which has established the difference between the Order and the… [continues online] **read ›**

Early Liturgies, *c. 200–400 AD · source 21*

21 *Divine Liturgy of St. James* 1 (on point 6) “for Your holy, catholic, and apostolic Church throughout the world. Even now, O Lord… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · source 22*

22 *De Principiis (On First Principles)* (1885 English) **Quote 9, page 4** “seeing there are many who think they hold the opinions of Christ, and yet some of these think differently from their predecessors, yet as the teaching of the Church, transmitted… [continues online] **read ›**

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Asterius Urbanus, *c. 232–250 AD · source 23*

23 *Extant Writings of Asterius Urbanus* 1 (on point 5) things, and to prophesy in a way contrary to the custom of the Church, as handed down from early times and preserved from there forward in continuous succession. Among those… [continues online] **read ›**

Novatian, *c. 240–258 AD · source 24*

24 *Treatise Concerning the Trinity* 29 **Quote 10, page 5** "the order of reason and the authority of the faith, in the… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 25–30*

25 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 3) "the power of remitting sins was given to the apostles, and to the churches which they, sent by Christ, established, and to the bishops who succeeded to them by vicarious… [continues online] **read ›**

26 *Epistles* (on point 3) unity of the Catholic Church everywhere, to make a merely human church. He also sends his new apostles through very many cities, so that he may set up some new… [continues online] **read ›**

27 *Epistles* (on point 4) I have written and what they have replied may be made known to our brothers. Moreover, if any bishops from other places, my colleagues, or any presbyters or deacons, are… [continues online] **read ›**

28 *Epistles* (on point 4) made an example to others, both in courage and in the fear of God. I had indeed believed that the presbyters and deacons there with you would more fully warn… [continues online] **read ›**

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

30 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 4) "that the Church is founded upon the bishops, and every act of the Church is controlled by these same rulers… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 31–36*

31 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 2) "priests, and Levites were ordained by Moses, the man most beloved by God. By our Savior we apostles, thirteen in number, were ordained. And by the apostles, I James, and… [continues online] **read ›**

32 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 11, page 5** we, the twelve apostles of the Lord, who are now together, give you these divine constitutions concerning every form of the church. Paul, the chosen vessel, our fellow apostle, is… [continues online] **read ›**

33 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 4) "constitutions concerning this mystical worship, we, the apostles, do ordain for you, the bishops, presbyters, and deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

34 *Apostolic Constitutions* fellow workers of Paul, received and left to you. While the Gospel is being read, let all the presbyters and deacons, and all the people, stand up in great silence… [continues online] **read ›**

35 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 4) does not receive the blessing. He lays on hands, ordains, offers, and receives the blessing from bishops, but never from presbyters. A bishop removes from office any clergyman who deserves… [continues online] **read ›**

36 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 4) of the clergy to baptize. For example, not readers, singers, doorkeepers, or ministers, but only bishops and presbyters. Even then, the deacons are to assist them in it. But those… [continues online] **read ›**

Malchion, *c. 260–280 AD · source 37*

37 *Epistle Against Paul of Samosata* 1 (on point 4) Dionysius and Maximus, and to all our fellow ministers throughout the world—both bishops and presbyters and deacons—and to the whole Catholic Church under heaven: Helenus, Hymenaeus, Theophilus, Theotecnus… [continues online] **read ›**

Archelaus, *c. 270–300 AD · source 38*

38 *Disputation with Manes* 1 is, the foundation of the Church, and has put us in trust of the… [continues online] **read ›**

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Anonymous · *source 39*

39 *Treatise on Re-Baptism* 1 (on point 5) or discussion could have arisen at all if each one of us had been content with the venerable authority of all the churches, and with fitting humility had wished to… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome · *sources 40–43*

40 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Quotes 1, 2, page 2** "Thus, preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits of… [continues online] **read ›**

41 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English) **Quotes 4, 12, pages 3, 5** "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 ›**

42 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (on point 2) "what wonder is it if those in Christ who were entrusted with such a duty by God, appointed… [continues online] **read ›**

43 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English; on point 4) us reverence the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was given for us; let us esteem those who have the rule over us… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *100 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

44 **Exodus 13:21** God went before them, by day in a pillar of cloud to show them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire. **read ›**

45 **Exodus 29:30** The priest from among his sons who succeeds him, who goes into the tabernacle of witness to minister in the holy place, shall put them on for seven days. **read ›**

46 **Leviticus 16:32** The priest whom they anoint, and whose hands they consecrate to serve as priest after his father, shall make atonement; he shall put on the linen garment, the holy garment. **read ›**

47 **Leviticus 21:10** And the high priest among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured, and who has been consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor tear his garments; **read ›**

48 **Numbers 10:13** They set out first by the voice of the Lord, by the hand of Moses. **read ›**

49 **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 ›**

50 **Numbers 11:24** So Moses went out and spoke the words of the Lord to the people; and he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and set them all around the tabernacle. **read ›**

51 **Numbers 11:25** Then the Lord came down in a cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was upon him and put it upon the seventy men, the elders; and when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, but did not do so again. **read ›**

52 **Numbers 15:23** just as the Lord commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day the Lord gave the command to you and onward throughout your generations, **read ›**

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

54 **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 ›**

55 **Deuteronomy 1:33** who goes before you on the way to choose a place for you, guiding you in fire by night and in a cloud by day, showing you the way in which you go. **read ›**

56 **Deuteronomy 32:12** The Lord alone led them, and there was no foreign god with them. **read ›**

57 **1 Chronicles 9:2** and those who dwelt formerly in their possessions in the cities of Israel: the priests, the Levites, and the given ones. **read ›**

58 **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 ›**

59 **2 Chronicles 31:15** by the hand of Odom, Benjamin, Jesus, Shimei, Amariah, and Shecaniah, by the hand of the priests, faithfully, to give to their brothers according to their daily courses, to great and small alike, **read ›**

60 **2 Chronicles 31:16** besides the offspring of the males from three years old and upward, to every one who entered the house of the Lord, by a daily account, for ministry in the daily courses of their arrangement. **read ›**

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61 **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 ›**

62 **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 ›**

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

64 **Ezra 8:11** of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty-eight males; **read ›**

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

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

67 **Ecclesiastes 11:3** If the clouds are filled with rain, they pour it out on the earth; and if a tree falls in the south or in the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will be. **read ›**

68 **Ecclesiastes 12:2** before the sun and the light are darkened, and the moon and the stars, and the clouds return after the rain; **read ›**

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

70 **Isaiah 7:1** Now it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up against Jerusalem to make war on it, but they could not besiege it. **read ›**

71 **Isaiah 13:1** The vision which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw against Babylon. **read ›**

72 **Isaiah 13:4** The sound of many nations on the mountains, like that of many nations; the sound of kings and of nations gathered together. The Lord of hosts has given command to a nation of armed fighters, **read ›**

73 **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 ›**

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

75 **Daniel 11:14** And in those times many shall rise up against the king of the south; and the sons of the troublemakers of your people shall lift themselves up to establish a vision, and they shall grow weak. **read ›**

76 **1 Esdras 1:2** having set the priests in their robes by their daily courses in the temple of the Lord. **read ›**

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

78 **1 Esdras 5:40** 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 ›**

79 **1 Esdras 7:2** supervised the holy works very carefully, working together with the elders of the Jews and the temple officials. **read ›**

80 **1 Esdras 8:11** So all who are of such a mind, let them set out with you, as it has seemed good to me and to my seven friends, the counselors, **read ›**

81 **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 ›**

82 **1 Esdras 8:94** as has been decided by you and by all who obey the law of the Lord. **read ›**

83 **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 ›**

84 **1 Esdras 9:38** And the whole multitude gathered together in the open square before the gate of the temple toward the east, **read ›**

85 **Wisdom of Solomon 9:17** Who has known your counsel, unless you gave wisdom and sent your holy Spirit from on high? **read ›**

86 **Wisdom of Solomon 10:10** When a righteous man fled from his brother’s anger, she guided him in straight paths; she showed him the kingdom of God, and gave him knowledge of holy things; she prospered him in his toils, and multiplied his labors. **read ›**

87 **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 ›**

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

89 **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 ›**

90 **Wisdom of Sirach 45:15** Moses filled his hands and anointed him with holy oil; it became for him an everlasting covenant, and for his seed for the days of heaven, to minister to the Lord and to serve as priest together, and to bless his people in his name. **read ›**

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

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

93 **1 Maccabees 3:55** After this Judas appointed leaders of the people, commanders of thousands and of hundreds and of fifties and of tens. **read ›**

94 **1 Maccabees 14:19** And these were read before the assembly in Jerusalem. **read ›**

95 **1 Maccabees 14:35** The people saw Simon's deeds and the glory he planned to bring to his nation, and they made him their leader and high priest, because he had done all these things, and for the righteousness and the faithfulness he had kept toward his nation, and because he sought in every way to exalt his people. **read ›**

96 **1 Maccabees 14:38** And King Demetrius confirmed him in the high priesthood accordingly, **read ›**

97 **1 Maccabees 14:41** and that the Jews and the priests were well pleased that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a faithful prophet should arise; **read ›**

98 **1 Maccabees 14:47** Simon accepted, and agreed to be high priest, and to be general and ethnarch of the Jews and of the priests, and to preside over them all. **read ›**

99 **2 Maccabees 11:3** and to make the temple pay taxes like the other shrines of the nations, and to put the high priesthood up for sale every year. **read ›**

100 **2 Maccabees 11:23** Now that our father has passed on to the gods, we wish the subjects of the kingdom to be free from disturbance and to attend to their own affairs. **read ›**

101 **2 Maccabees 12:2** But among the local governors, Timothy and Apollonius the son of Gennaeus, and also Hieronymus and Demophon, and besides these Nicanor the Cypriarch, would not let them settle down and live in quiet. **read ›**

102 **4 Maccabees 3:20** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

103 **4 Maccabees 6:33** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

104 **4 Maccabees 7:1** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

105 **4 Maccabees 13:1** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

106 **4 Maccabees 13:4** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

107 **4 Maccabees 15:3** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

108 **1 Enoch 2:2** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

109 **1 Enoch 90:21** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

110 **Acts 1:15** In those days Peter stood up among the disciples—the gathering numbered about a hundred and twenty—and said, **read ›**

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

112 **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 ›**

113 **Acts 6:3** Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this work. **read ›**

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

115 **Acts 9:31** So the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were built up. Walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they multiplied. **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 15:2** After considerable dissension and debate between Paul and Barnabas and these men, Paul and Barnabas and some others from among them were appointed to go up to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem about this question. **read ›**

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118 **Acts 15:7** After much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that long ago God chose among us that through my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. **read ›**

119 **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 ›**

120 **Acts 15:23** They wrote this letter to be delivered by them: “The apostles, the elders, and the brothers, to the brothers among the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. **read ›**

121 **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 ›**

122 **1 Corinthians 1:16** I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else. **read ›**

123 **1 Corinthians 4:15** For though you have ten thousand tutors in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. **read ›**

124 **1 Corinthians 11:3** But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. **read ›**

125 **1 Corinthians 11:16** But if anyone wishes to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God. **read ›**

126 **1 Corinthians 12:28** God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, and kinds of tongues. **read ›**

127 **1 Corinthians 12:29** Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all miracle workers? **read ›**

128 **Galatians 2:9** and when they perceived the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas and John, those who were reputed to be pillars, gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcision. **read ›**

129 **Ephesians 2:20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, **read ›**

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

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

132 **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 ›**

133 **1 Timothy 3:1** The saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a good work. **read ›**

134 **1 Timothy 3:4** one who rules his own house well, having children in subjection with all reverence; **read ›**

135 **1 Timothy 3:15** but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct oneself in God’s house, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. **read ›**

136 **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 ›**

137 **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 ›**

138 **Titus 2:15** Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you. **read ›**

139 **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 ›**

140 **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 ›**

141 **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 ›**

142 **1 Peter 5:3** not as lording it over those entrusted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock. **read ›**

143 **3 John 1:9** I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not receive us. **read ›**

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ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *97 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.

Numbers 17:2

Proverbs 29:3

Isaiah 60:17 · 63:3 · 66:2

Matthew 4:17 · 5:6 · 5:15 · 5:17 · 7:7 · 10:5 · 10:19 · 11:27 · 13:27 · 15:24 · 21:32 · 22:39 · 24:5 · 28:19

Mark 4:21 · 7:9 · 8:38

Luke 5:39 · 10:16 · 11:23 · 12:47 · 12:50 · 16:15 · 21:14 · 22:32

John 5:17 · 5:39 · 7:37 · 14:16 · 14:18 · 15:1 · 15:12 · 15:20 · 16:13 · 20:22 · 21:17

Acts 1:8 · 2:17 · 9:5 · 20:29

Romans 1:17 · 2:13 · 8:7 · 8:9 · 8:16 · 13:14

1 Corinthians 1:10 · 2:12 · 6:10 · 7:40 · 9:25 · 12:3 · 12:8 · 14:33 · 15:6 · 15:41

2 Corinthians 4:13

Galatians 1:10 · 3:11 · 3:27 · 5:17 · 6:1

Ephesians 3:18 · 4:2 · 4:5 · 4:13 · 4:27 · 6:9

Philippians 1:18 · 2:2 · 3:16

Colossians 3:25

1 Thessalonians 4:17

2 Thessalonians 3:6

1 Timothy 2:4 · 3:16 · 4:1 · 5:21 · 6:16

2 Timothy 4:6

Titus 1:6 · 2:14

Hebrews 3:5 · 6:6 · 10:38

1 Peter 1:17 · 1:19 · 2:5 · 2:9

1 John 2:27

Revelation 1:6 · 2:5

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

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A THF member asked “Who guided and led the early church?” on May 18, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY