THE QUESTION

Why did the early church say it needs bishops, elders and deacons?

Asked by a THF member on July 1, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 8 numbered quotations · the 45 early Christian passages and 237 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/why-did-the-early-church-say-it-needs-bishops-elders-and-deacons

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

Early writers saw bishops, elders and deacons as an order the apostles set up, with different duties given by prayer and the laying on of hands. Ignatius says that without them there is no church. They guard the faith received from the apostles, keep the church united, and care for the flock.

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

Without these three, there is no church

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

Ignatius of Antioch names all three offices together: the bishop, the presbyters (elders) as a council like the apostles, and the deacons as appointed by Christ. He says plainly that a church does not exist without them.

1

> "In the same way, let everyone honor the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as the council of God, and assembly of the apostles. Without these, there is no Church."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Trallians* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 8, page 6** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 8

The apostles themselves appointed these leaders

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

Clement of Rome says the apostles tested their first converts by the Spirit and made them bishops and deacons. He presents this as orderly and according to God's will, not as a later human invention.

2

> "Both these appointments were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God."
>
> *later in the same passage*
>
> "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 42, page 8** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 3 OF 8

Different names mean different duties

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

The Apostolic Constitutions say these leaders were made by prayer and the laying on of hands. The separate titles of bishop, presbyter and deacon show that each has its own work.

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3 “For you certainly know that those named by us bishops, and presbyters, and deacons, were made so by prayer and by the laying on of hands, and that the difference in their names shows the difference in their duties.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 33, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 8

Leaders are guardians of sound doctrine

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

Hippolytus, writing as a church leader, sees himself as a successor of the apostles and a guardian of the church. That duty, he says, means staying watchful and never hiding sound teaching.

4 “But we, as their successors, and as sharers in this grace, high priesthood, and teaching office, and since we are regarded as guardians of the Church, must not be found lacking in watchfulness or willing to hide sound doctrine.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Hippolytus,** *Refutation of All Heresies* 1 (c. 200–236 AD) **Source 24, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 5 OF 8

The apostolic faith must be defended

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

Irenaeus writes his work so that believers can resist false teachers. He calls the faith the church received from the apostles the only true and life-giving faith, handed on to her children.

5 “Remember then, the things I stated in the two previous books, and by connecting these with them, you will receive from me a very comprehensive refutation of all the heretics; and you will faithfully and vigorously resist them in defense of the only true and life-giving faith, which the Church has received from the apostles and passed on to her children.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 17, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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POINT 6 OF 8

Order serves the unity of the church

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

Ignatius links the bishop, presbytery and deacons with staying grounded in the apostles' teaching. Being subject to the bishop and to one another keeps the church united in God.

6 “Be subject to the bishop, and to one another, as Christ is to the Father, so that there may be unity according to God among you.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Magnesians* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 7, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 7 OF 8

Peace in the flock comes first

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

Clement of Rome urges anyone who has caused division to step aside willingly. What matters most is that the flock live in peace with the presbyters set over it.

7 “Let them declare, "If because of me there has been sedition, disagreement, and division, I will leave, I will go wherever you want, and I will do whatever the majority commands; only let the flock of Christ live in peace with the presbyters appointed over it."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 44, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 8 OF 8

Shepherds must not become butchers

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

Cyprian says those placed over the flock must keep the church's rule and teach the careless. Allowing what destroys souls is not kindness but deception.

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8 “But it is the duty of those placed over them to keep the rule, and to instruct those who are either rushing ahead or ignorant, so that those who ought to be shepherds of the sheep may not become their butchers.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Epistles* (c. 248–258 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 29, page 7 **Read it in the library ›**

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages describe one bishop with presbyters and deacons, so they do not speak directly to churches led only by a group of elders.
- They do not give a full list of each office's duties.
- 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 45 early Christian passages and 237 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–45, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 46–141, in Bible order), then 141 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 *45 passages from 13 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · sources 1–2*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 15 (1885 English) “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 ›**

2 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 4 (1885 English) 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 3–4*

3 *Shepherd* (1885 English) “the bishops never failed to protect, by their service, the widows, and those who were in want, and always maintained a holy conversation… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Shepherd* (1885 English) “will tell, therefore, those who preside over the Church, to direct their ways in righteousness, that they may receive in full the promises with great glory… [continues online] **read ›**

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Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 5–13*

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

6 *Epistle to the Trallians* (on point 1) on your guard, therefore, against such people, so that you do not set a snare for your own souls. Act in such a way that your life is without offense… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Epistle to the Magnesians* (1885 English) **Quote 6, page 4** “therefore, to be established in the doctrines of the Lord and the apostles, that so all things, whatsoever ye do, may prosper, both in the flesh and spirit, in faith… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Epistle to the Trallians* (1885 English) **Quote 1, page 2** “like manner, let all reverence the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Epistle to the Trallians* (1885 English; on point 1) “do ye reverence them as Christ Jesus, of whose place they are the keepers, even as the bishop is the representative of the Father of all things, and the presbyters… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (on point 1) 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 ›**

11 *Epistles of Ignatius* (on point 6) 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 ›**

12 *Epistles of Ignatius* (1885 English; on point 8) presbyters, “feed the flock which is among you,” till God shall show who is to hold the rule over you… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Epistles of Ignatius* (1885 English; on point 6) “ye subject to the bishop, to the presbyters, and to the deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

Polycarp, *c. 100–155 AD · sources 14–15*

14 *Epistle to the Philippians* (1885 English; on point 6) “it is needful to abstain from all these things, being subject to the presbyters and deacons, as unto God and Christ… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *Epistle to the Philippians* (1885 English; on point 8) “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 16–20*

16 *Against Heresies: Book IV* (1885 English; on point 4) “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 ›**

17 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 3** “faithfully and strenuously shalt thou resist them in defence of the only true and life-giving faith, which the Church has received from the apostles and imparted to her sons… [continues online] **read ›**

18 *Against Heresies: Book III* (on point 5) defeated by their own arguments. On the other hand, it has been shown that the preaching of the Church remains consistent everywhere, stays steady, and is supported by the prophets… [continues online] **read ›**

19 *Against Heresies: Book IV* (1885 English; on point 5) “it consists in] reading [the word of God] without falsification, and a lawful and diligent exposition in harmony with the Scriptures, both without danger and without blasphemy… [continues online] **read ›**

20 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English; on point 4) “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 ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 21–22*

21 *Stromata* 3 “themselves in ruling their own house, so that they may also be able to preside over the whole Church. So then, each person, in whatever calling he was called, as… [continues online] **read ›**

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22 *Stromata* 7.1 (1885 English; on point 3) “also, in the Church, the elders attend to the department which has improvement for its object… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · source 23*

23 *On Baptism* 17 (1885 English; on point 3) “these, even laymen have the right; for what is equally received can be equally given… [continues online] **read ›**

Hippolytus, *c. 200–236 AD · sources 24–25*

24 *Refutation of All Heresies* 1 (1885 English) **Quote 4, page 3** “we, as being their successors, and as participators in this grace, high-priesthood, and office of teaching, as well as being reputed guardians of the Church, must not be found… [continues online] **read ›**

25 *Against the Heresy of Noetus* 1 (on point 4) 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 · source 26*

26 *Commentary on John* 10 (1885 English; on point 2) “I will establish your rulers in peace and your overseers in righteousness… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 27–32*

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

28 *Epistles* (on point 6) outside the bounds of unity. Whoever he may be, and whatever he may be, if he is not in the Church of Christ, he is not a Christian. Even if… [continues online] **read ›**

29 *Epistles* **Quote 8, page 5** “it is the duty of those placed over them to keep the… [continues online] **read ›**

30 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 8) “warning, indeed, our presbyters and deacons ought to have given you, that they might cherish the sheep committed to their care, and by the divine authority might instruct them in… [continues online] **read ›**

31 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 8) “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 ›**

32 *Epistles* (on point 2) “Lord, whose commands and warnings we ought to keep, describes the honor of a bishop and the order of His Church in the Gospel. He says to Peter: “I say… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 33–40*

33 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 3, page 3** “among us, you yourselves are not ignorant of them. For you certainly know that those named by us bishops, and presbyters, and deacons, were made so by prayer and by… [continues online] **read ›**

34 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 5) because this heresy then seemed more able to deceive people, and the whole Church was in danger, we twelve gathered together in Jerusalem. Matthias had been chosen as an apostle… [continues online] **read ›**

35 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 2) in the highest heavens, and yet look down on the things below: You who appointed the rules of the Church by the coming of Your Christ in the flesh; of… [continues online] **read ›**

36 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 3) When you gather an assembly of the Church, since you are like the captain of a great ship, arrange the meetings with all possible skill. Instruct the deacons, like sailors, … [continues online] **read ›**

37 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 2) 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 present with us, and James… [continues online] **read ›**

38 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) “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 ›**

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39 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 4) “watchman is the bishop, who is set in the Church, who is obliged by his preaching to testify and vehemently to forewarn concerning that judgment… [continues online] **read ›**

40 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 1) “the presbyters be esteemed by you to represent us the apostles, and let them be the teachers of divine knowledge… [continues online] **read ›**

Peter of Alexandria, *c. 300–311 AD · source 41*

41 *Canonical Epistle* when, in adverse and turbulent times, they might have been useful in confirming them in the faith, and after they had been counted worthy to bear testimony to the faith… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome · *sources 42–45*

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

43 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English; on point 2) “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 ›**

44 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 4** “let the flock of Christ live on terms of peace with the presbyters set over it.” He that acts thus shall procure to himself great glory in the Lord… [continues online] **read ›**

45 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English; on point 7) “are fond of contention, brethren, and full of zeal about things which do not pertain to salvation… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *96 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

46 **Exodus 24:9** Then Moses went up, and Aaron, and Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. **read ›**

47 **Numbers 1:16** These are those called from the congregation, leaders of the tribes by their families; they are commanders of thousands in Israel. **read ›**

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

49 **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 ›**

50 **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 ›**

51 **1 Chronicles 9:23** These and their sons were over the gates in the house of the Lord and in the house of the tabernacle, to keep watch. **read ›**

52 **1 Chronicles 9:26** for the four mighty men of the gates are in a position of trust. The Levites were over the chambers and over the treasuries of the house of God; they encamped, **read ›**

53 **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 ›**

54 **2 Chronicles 35:2** He set the priests in their charges and strengthened them for the works of the house of the Lord. **read ›**

55 **Ezra 1:10** and four hundred and ten double silver ones, and a thousand other vessels. **read ›**

56 **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 ›**

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

58 **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 ›**

59 **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 ›**

60 **Proverbs 5:19** Let your loving deer and your graceful colt keep company with you, and let your own lead you and be with you at all times; for, carried along in her love, you will be greatly increased. **read ›**

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

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62 **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 ›**

63 **Ecclesiastes 3:22** And I saw that there is no good except that a man should be glad in his works, for that is his portion; for who will bring him to see what will be after him? **read ›**

64 **Isaiah 1:8** The daughter of Zion shall be left like a tent in a vineyard, and like a hut for guarding fruit in a cucumber field, like a besieged city. **read ›**

65 **Isaiah 13:7** Therefore every hand will grow slack, and every soul of man will lose heart. **read ›**

66 **Isaiah 16:13** This is the word which the Lord spoke concerning Moab, when he spoke. **read ›**

67 **Isaiah 17:4** In that day the glory of Jacob will fail, and the rich things of his glory will be shaken. **read ›**

68 **Ezekiel 17:9** Therefore say: Thus says the Lord: Will it prosper? Shall not the roots of its tenderness and its fruit rot? And all its early shoots shall wither — and not by a great arm nor by many people — so as to tear it up from its roots. **read ›**

69 **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 ›**

70 **1 Esdras 1:10** And when these things had been done, the priests and the Levites stood in good order, **read ›**

71 **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 ›**

72 **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 ›**

73 **1 Esdras 7:2** supervised the holy works very carefully, working together with the elders of the Jews and the temple officials. **read ›**

74 **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 ›**

75 **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 ›**

76 **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 ›**

77 **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 ›**

78 **Wisdom of Sirach 4:28** Contend for the truth even to death, and the Lord God will fight for you. **read ›**

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

80 **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 ›**

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

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

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

84 **1 Maccabees 2:50** And now, my children, be zealous for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of our fathers. **read ›**

85 **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 ›**

86 **1 Maccabees 5:19** And he commanded them, saying, "Take charge of this people, and do not join battle with the nations until we return." **read ›**

87 **1 Maccabees 5:32** he said to the men of his army, "Fight today for your brothers!" **read ›**

88 **1 Maccabees 14:19** And these were read before the assembly in Jerusalem. **read ›**

89 **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 ›**

90 **1 Maccabees 15:34** Now that we have the opportunity, we are holding firmly to the inheritance of our fathers. **read ›**

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91 **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 ›**

92 **2 Maccabees 3:22** So they called upon God Almighty to keep the things entrusted safe and secure for those who had entrusted them. **read ›**

93 **2 Maccabees 14:38** For in the former times of separation he had been brought to trial for Judaism, and he had risked body and soul for Judaism with all earnestness. **read ›**

94 **2 Maccabees 15:17** Encouraged by the words of Judas, which were very noble and able to stir them to valor and to make the souls of the young men upright, they determined not to stay in camp but to charge bravely, and to engage with all manliness and decide the matter, because the city, the sanctuary, and the temple were in danger. **read ›**

95 **3 Maccabees 1:23** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

96 **4 Maccabees 1:8** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

97 **4 Maccabees 9:23** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

98 **4 Maccabees 12:17** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

99 **4 Maccabees 13:7** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

100 **4 Maccabees 15:32** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

101 **4 Maccabees 16:13** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

102 **4 Maccabees 16:16** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

103 **4 Maccabees 16:22** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

104 **4 Maccabees 17:4** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

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

106 **1 Enoch 46:8** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

107 **1 Enoch 100:5** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

108 **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 ›**

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

110 **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 ›**

111 **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 ›**

112 **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 ›**

113 **Acts 20:17** From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and summoned the elders of the church. **read ›**

114 **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 ›**

115 **Romans 4:17** As it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations." This is in the presence of him whom he believed: God, who gives life to the dead, and calls the things that are not, as though they were. **read ›**

116 **1 Corinthians 1:16** I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else. **read ›**

117 **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 ›**

118 **Galatians 2:5** We did not yield to them in submission even for an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. **read ›**

119 **Philippians 1:27** Only let your conduct as citizens be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together for faithfulness to the gospel, **read ›**

120 **Philippians 1:30** having the same struggle that you saw in me and now hear that I have. **read ›**

121 **Philippians 2:16** holding fast the word of life, so that I may have cause to boast in the day of Christ that I did not run in vain nor labor in vain. **read ›**

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122 **1 Timothy 1:19** holding faithfulness and a good conscience, which some have thrust away and so made shipwreck concerning the faith, **read ›**

123 **1 Timothy 3:1** The saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a good work. **read ›**

124 **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 ›**

125 **1 Timothy 3:7** He must also have a good testimony from outsiders, so that he does not fall into reproach and the devil's trap. **read ›**

126 **1 Timothy 3:9** holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. **read ›**

127 **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 ›**

128 **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 ›**

129 **1 Timothy 5:19** Do not receive an accusation against an elder except at the word of two or three witnesses. **read ›**

130 **1 Timothy 6:12** Fight the good fight of faithfulness; take hold of eternal life, to which you were called, and you made the good confession before many witnesses. **read ›**

131 **2 Timothy 1:13** Hold to the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faithfulness and love in Christ Jesus. **read ›**

132 **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 ›**

133 **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 ›**

134 **Titus 1:9** holding firmly to the trustworthy word that accords with the teaching, so that he may both exhort by sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict it. **read ›**

135 **Titus 1:13** This testimony is true. For this reason rebuke them sharply, so that they may be sound in the faith, **read ›**

136 **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 ›**

137 **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 ›**

138 **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 ›**

139 **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 ›**

140 **1 Peter 5:3** not as lording it over those entrusted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock. **read ›**

141 **Jude 1:3** Beloved, while making every effort to write to you about the common salvation, I found it necessary to write and urge you to contend earnestly for the faith delivered once for all to the saints. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *141 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Genesis 4:25

Exodus 23:14

Leviticus 15:18 · 19:15

Deuteronomy 8:18 · 20:5 · 20:19

Proverbs 9:17 · 22:6 · 31:20

Song of Solomon 2:16

Isaiah 1:15 · 1:17 · 50:9 · 60:16 · 60:17 · 63:3

Jeremiah 1:5 · 23:24

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Matthew 4:10 · 5:6 · 5:9 · 5:19 · 6:12 · 6:19 · 6:24 · 7:21 · 10:5 · 10:33 · 10:39 · 12:31 · 15:24 · 18:20 · 18:22 · 19:6 · 20:28 · 23:9 · 24:11 · 28:19

Mark 7:9 · 9:50 · 10:43 · 12:29 · 13:35

Luke 6:30 · 6:46 · 10:16 · 11:23 · 12:35 · 12:47 · 12:50 · 14:26 · 20:25 · 20:27 · 20:34

John 1:3 · 3:6 · 6:27 · 20:22

Acts 1:8 · 1:20 · 4:32 · 9:5 · 10:13 · 10:34 · 11:15 · 15:1 · 15:7 · 15:9 · 15:13

Romans 2:4 · 7:4 · 7:12 · 12:17 · 13:14 · 14:10 · 14:12 · 14:19 · 14:21 · 15:27

1 Corinthians 1:9 · 6:9 · 6:10 · 6:12 · 6:18 · 7:5 · 7:8 · 7:9 · 7:14 · 7:32 · 7:39 · 9:25 · 10:20 · 10:23 · 10:26 · 14:33 · 14:34

2 Corinthians 1:3 · 5:10 · 8:21 · 11:3

Galatians 2:17 · 3:27 · 5:13 · 5:16 · 5:17 · 6:1 · 6:7

Ephesians 4:2 · 5:22 · 6:5 · 6:9

Philippians 1:18 · 4:3 · 4:8

Colossians 2:20 · 3:22 · 4:1

1 Thessalonians 5:12

2 Thessalonians 2:3

1 Timothy 3:4 · 3:8 · 4:1 · 4:3 · 5:14

2 Timothy 2:12 · 2:15 · 2:20 · 4:6

Titus 1:15

Hebrews 13:5

James 1:12 · 2:13 · 5:14 · 5:16

1 Peter 1:19 · 2:9 · 2:11

1 John 2:27

Revelation 3:12 · 22:18

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

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Why did the early church say it needs bishops, elders and deacons?” on July 1, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY