

The Didache

Modern English version · SermonIndex

Anonymous · c. AD 50–120 (debated)

The “Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,” an early Christian manual on how to live, worship and order the church. It is usually dated between the late first and early second century, and it was rediscovered in 1873.

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Chapter 1

1.1 There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two ways.

Scripture: [Matthew 22:37-39](#); [Mark 12:30-31](#); [Leviticus 19:18](#)

1.2 The way of life is this: first, you shall love the God who made you; second, your neighbor as yourself. And whatever you do not want done to you, do not do to anyone else.

Scripture: [Matthew 7:12](#); [Luke 6:31](#)

1.3 The teaching of these words is this: Bless those who curse you, pray for your enemies, and fast for those who persecute you. For what credit is it if you love those who love you? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? But you must love those who hate you, and then you will have no enemy.

Scripture: [Matthew 5:44](#); [Matthew 5:46-47](#); [Luke 6:32-33](#)

1.4 Keep away from fleshly and bodily desires. If someone slaps your right cheek, turn the other to him as well, and you will be perfect. If someone forces you to go one mile, go two with him. If someone takes your cloak, give him your tunic too. If someone takes what is yours, do not demand it back — you could not anyway.

Translator’s note. The last clause is literally “for you cannot even.” The sense is unclear, and Lake explains it away. We keep it close to the Greek.

Scripture: [1 Peter 2:11](#); [Matthew 5:39](#); [Matthew 5:41](#); [Matthew 5:48](#); [Luke 6:30](#)

1.5 Give to everyone who asks you, and do not ask for anything back, for the Father wants everyone to receive from the gifts he has freely given. Blessed is the one who gives according to the commandment, for he is without fault. Woe to the one who receives. If someone receives because he is in need, he is without fault; but the one who receives when he has no need will have to answer for why he took it and what he used it for. Put in custody, he will be questioned about what he has done, and he will not get out until he has paid back the last penny.

Translator's note. "The last penny" is a Roman coin, the quadrans, as in [Matthew 5:26](#).

Scripture: [Matthew 5:26](#)

1.6 But concerning this it has also been said: "Let your gift sweat in your hands until you know to whom you are giving."

Chapter 2

2.1 Now the second commandment of the teaching:

2.2 You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not corrupt boys. You shall not engage in sexual immorality. You shall not steal. You shall not practice magic. You shall not make potions. You shall not kill a child by abortion, or put to death one who has been born. You shall not covet what belongs to your neighbor.

Translator's note. Lake has "sodomy." The Greek word means to corrupt a boy, that is, the sexual abuse of children.

Scripture: [Exodus 20:13-17](#); [Matthew 19:18](#)

2.3 You shall not swear falsely. You shall not give false testimony. You shall not speak evil of anyone. You shall not hold a grudge.

2.4 You shall not be double-minded or double-tongued, for a double tongue is a deadly snare.

2.5 Your word shall not be false or empty, but fulfilled in action.

2.6 You shall not be greedy, or a swindler, or a hypocrite, or malicious, or arrogant. You shall not plot evil against your neighbor.

2.7 You shall not hate anyone. Some you shall correct, some you shall pray for, and some you shall love more than your own life.

Chapter 3

3.1 My child, flee from every evil, and from everything like it.

3.2 Do not be quick-tempered, for anger leads to murder. Do not be jealous, quarrelsome, or hot-headed, for from all of these murders

come.

Translator's note. Lake has "proud." The Greek word means quick to anger, and the next clause ("anger leads to murder") shows that is the sense.

3.3 My child, do not be lustful, for lust leads to sexual immorality. Do not be foul-mouthed or let your eyes wander, for from all of these adulteries come.

Translator's note. The Greek word is literally "high-eyed." Here it most likely means letting the eyes wander toward lust. Lake has "a lifter up of the eyes."

3.4 My child, do not practice divination by omens, for it leads to idolatry. Do not be a caster of spells, an astrologer, or a performer of cleansing rites, and do not even want to look at such things, for from all of these idolatry comes.

3.5 My child, do not be a liar, for lying leads to theft. Do not be a lover of money or a seeker of glory, for from all of these thefts come.

3.6 My child, do not be a grumbler, for it leads to blasphemy. Do not be self-willed or evil-minded, for from all of these blasphemies come.

3.7 Be gentle instead, for the gentle will inherit the earth.

3.8 Be patient, merciful, innocent, quiet, and good, and always tremble at the words you have heard.

Scripture: [Matthew 5:5](#); [Psalm 37:11](#)

3.9 Do not exalt yourself or let your soul become bold. Your soul shall not attach itself to the lofty, but you shall live among the righteous and the humble.

3.10 Accept as good whatever happens to you, knowing that nothing happens apart from God.

Chapter 4

4.1 My child, remember day and night the one who speaks God's word to you, and honor him as you would the Lord, for where the Lord's lordship is spoken of, there the Lord is.

4.2 Seek out the company of the saints every day, so that you may find rest in their words.

4.3 Do not cause division, but bring peace to those who fight. Judge fairly. Do not show favoritism when you correct wrongdoing.

Scripture: [Deuteronomy 1:16](#); [Proverbs 31:9](#)

4.4 Do not waver in your mind about whether something will

happen or not.

4.5 Do not be someone who stretches out his hands to receive but pulls them back when it is time to give.

4.6 If you have earned something by the work of your hands, give it as a ransom for your sins.

Translator's note. The Greek says "a ransom for your sins." Christians in different traditions read almsgiving language like this in different ways; compare Sirach 3:30 and Tobit 12:9, and read it alongside the New Testament teaching on Christ's sacrifice.

4.7 Do not hesitate to give, and do not grumble when you give, for you will know who is the good rewarder.

4.8 Do not turn away from anyone in need. Share everything with your brother, and do not say that anything is your own. If you share what is immortal, how much more what is mortal?

4.9 Do not take your hand away from your son or your daughter, but from their youth teach them the fear of God.

4.10 Do not give orders in bitterness to your male or female slave, who hope in the same God, or they may cease to fear the God who is over you both. For he does not come to call people by outward status, but those whom the Spirit has prepared.

4.11 And you who are slaves, be subject to your masters as to a representative of God, with respect and fear.

4.12 Hate all hypocrisy and everything that is not pleasing to the Lord.

4.13 Do not abandon the Lord's commandments. Keep what you received, neither adding to it nor taking from it.

4.14 In the assembly, confess your wrongdoing, and do not go to prayer with a guilty conscience. This is the way of life.

Chapter 5

5.1 The way of death is this. First of all, it is evil and full of curses: murders, adulteries, lusts, sexual immorality, thefts, idolatries, magic, sorcery, robberies, false testimonies, hypocrisies, duplicity, deceit, pride, malice, stubbornness, greed, obscene talk, jealousy, recklessness, haughtiness, boasting.

Translator's note. Lake has "witchcrafts, charms"; the Greek words are magic and the preparing of potions or poisons.

Scripture: [Romans 1:29-30](#)

5.2 They are persecutors of the good, haters of truth, lovers of lies. They do not know the reward of righteousness. They do not hold

fast to what is good or to just judgment. They stay awake not for good but for evil. Gentleness and patience are far from them. They love worthless things and chase after payment. They have no mercy on the poor, do not work for the one crushed by hardship, and do not know the one who made them. They murder children and destroy what God has formed. They turn away the needy and oppress the afflicted. They defend the rich and judge the poor unjustly. They are utterly sinful. May you be delivered, children, from all of these.

| Scripture: [Romans 12:9](#); [Psalm 4:2](#)

Chapter 6

6.1 See that no one leads you astray from this way of the teaching, since such a person teaches you apart from God.

6.2 For if you can bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect. But if you cannot, do what you can.

6.3 Concerning food, bear what you can. But be very careful about food offered to idols, for that is the worship of dead gods.

Chapter 7

7.1 Concerning baptism, baptize this way: after you have taught all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in running water.

| *Translator's note.* "Running water" is literally "living water."

| Scripture: [Matthew 28:19](#)

7.2 If you do not have running water, baptize in other water. If you cannot in cold, then in warm.

7.3 If you have neither, pour water on the head three times, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

7.4 Before the baptism, let the one who baptizes and the one who is baptized fast, along with any others who are able. You must tell the one being baptized to fast for one or two days beforehand.

Chapter 8

8.1 Do not let your fasts be at the same time as the hypocrites'. They fast on Monday and Thursday, but you should fast on Wednesday and Friday.

8.2 Do not pray like the hypocrites either, but pray as the Lord commanded in his gospel: "Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your kingdom come. May your will be done, on

earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debt, as we also forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into testing, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the power and the glory forever.”

Translator’s note. “The evil one” could also be read “evil.” The Greek form allows both.

Scripture: [Matthew 6:9-13](#)

8.3 Pray this way three times a day.

Chapter 9

9.1 Concerning the Eucharist, give thanks this way:

9.2 First, for the cup: “We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of David your servant, which you made known to us through Jesus your servant. To you be glory forever.”

Translator’s note. “Servant” translates the Greek *pais*, which can mean “child” or “servant.” Luke has “child.” The same word is used of David and of Jesus.

9.3 And for the broken bread: “We thank you, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you made known to us through Jesus your servant. To you be glory forever.

9.4 As this broken bread was scattered over the hills and, when gathered, became one, so may your church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. For the glory and the power are yours through Jesus Christ forever.”

9.5 But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been baptized in the name of the Lord. For concerning this the Lord has said: “Do not give what is holy to the dogs.”

Scripture: [Matthew 7:6](#)

Chapter 10

10.1 After you have had enough to eat, give thanks this way:

10.2 “We thank you, holy Father, for your holy name, which you have made to dwell in our hearts, and for the knowledge, faith, and immortality which you made known to us through Jesus your servant. To you be glory forever.

Scripture: [Revelation 4:11](#)

10.3 You, almighty Master, created all things for the sake of your name. You gave food and drink to people to enjoy, so that they would give you thanks. But to us you have freely given spiritual food and drink, and eternal life, through your servant.

Translator's note. Lake has "eternal light," but the Greek text printed beside it reads "eternal life." We follow the Greek. This needs checking against the manuscript.

10.4 Above all we thank you that you are mighty. To you be glory forever.

10.5 Remember, Lord, your church. Deliver it from all evil and make it perfect in your love. Gather it, made holy, from the four winds into your kingdom, which you have prepared for it. For yours are the power and the glory forever.

Scripture: [Matthew 24:31](#)

10.6 Let grace come, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David! If anyone is holy, let him come. If anyone is not, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen."

Translator's note. "Maranatha" is Aramaic. It can be read either "Our Lord, come!" or "Our Lord has come."

Scripture: [Matthew 21:9](#); [1 Corinthians 16:22](#)

10.7 But allow the prophets to give thanks as much as they wish.

Chapter 11

11.1 So whoever comes and teaches you everything that has been said above, welcome him.

11.2 But if the teacher himself turns aside and teaches another doctrine that tears these things down, do not listen to him. But if his teaching adds righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, welcome him as the Lord.

11.3 Now concerning the apostles and prophets, act according to the rule of the gospel.

11.4 Let every apostle who comes to you be welcomed as the Lord.

11.5 But he must not stay more than one day, or two if there is need. If he stays three days, he is a false prophet.

11.6 When an apostle leaves, he must take nothing except bread until he finds lodging. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet.

11.7 Do not test or pass judgment on any prophet who is speaking in the Spirit, for every sin will be forgiven, but this sin will not be forgiven.

Scripture: [Matthew 12:31](#)

11.8 But not everyone who speaks in the Spirit is a prophet, only the one who has the ways of the Lord. So by their conduct the false prophet and the true prophet will be known.

11.9 No prophet who orders a meal in the Spirit shall eat of it. If he does, he is a false prophet.

11.10 Every prophet who teaches the truth but does not do what he teaches is a false prophet.

11.11 But a prophet who has been tested and is genuine, and who acts out the earthly mystery of the church, but does not teach others to do all that he does himself, shall not be judged by you. His judgment is with God, for the prophets of old did the same.

Translator's note. The phrase "the earthly mystery of the church" is very obscure, and scholars do not agree on its meaning. Lake has "a worldly mystery of the Church."

11.12 But whoever says in the Spirit, "Give me money," or anything else, do not listen to him. But if he tells you to give for others who are in need, let no one judge him.

Chapter 12

12.1 Let everyone who comes in the name of the Lord be welcomed. Then test him and you will know him, for you will have the discernment to tell right from left.

Translator's note. Literally, "you will have understanding of right and left," an idiom for telling true from false.

12.2 If the one who comes is only passing through, help him as much as you can. But he must not stay with you more than two or, if necessary, three days.

12.3 If he wants to settle among you and has a trade, let him work and eat.

12.4 If he has no trade, use your good sense to make sure that no Christian lives among you in idleness.

12.5 If he will not do this, he is trading on Christ. Beware of such people.

Chapter 13

13.1 Every true prophet who wants to settle among you is worthy of his food.

13.2 In the same way, a true teacher is also worthy, like a worker, of his food.

13.3 So take the firstfruits of every product of the winepress and the threshing floor, and of cattle and sheep, and give the firstfruits to the prophets, for they are your high priests.

13.4 But if you have no prophet, give to the poor.

13.5 When you make bread, take the firstfruits and give according to the commandment.

13.6 In the same way, when you open a jar of wine or oil, take the firstfruits and give them to the prophets.

13.7 Of money, clothing, and every possession, take the firstfruits as seems right to you, and give according to the commandment.

Chapter 14

14.1 On the Lord's own day, gather together, break bread, and give thanks, after confessing your wrongdoing, so that your sacrifice may be pure.

Translator's note. Literally, "on the Lord's of the Lord." "Day" is understood. Lake has "On the Lord's Day of the Lord."

14.2 But let no one who has a dispute with his companion join you until they have been reconciled, so that your sacrifice is not defiled.

Translator's note. The Greek text as digitized has garbled characters in this verse (probably a misprint of "until"). It needs correcting against the printed edition.

Scripture: [Malachi 1:11](#); [Matthew 5:23-24](#)

14.3 For this is what the Lord said: "In every place and at every time, offer me a pure sacrifice. For I am a great king," says the Lord, "and my name is wonderful among the nations."

Chapter 15

15.1 So appoint for yourselves overseers and deacons worthy of the Lord: gentle men, not lovers of money, truthful and tested. For they also carry out for you the ministry of the prophets and teachers.

15.2 So do not look down on them, for they are the ones honored among you, together with the prophets and teachers.

15.3 Correct one another not in anger but in peace, as you have it in the gospel. And let no one speak to anyone who has wronged a neighbor, or let him hear a word from you, until he repents.

15.4 Do your prayers, your acts of charity, and all your actions as you have it in the gospel of our Lord.

Chapter 16

16.1 Keep watch over your life. Do not let your lamps go out or your belts come loose, but be ready, for you do not know the hour when our Lord is coming.

Scripture: [Luke 12:35](#); [Matthew 24:42](#)

16.2 Gather often, seeking what is good for your souls. For all the time you have believed will be of no benefit to you unless you are made perfect at the final hour.

16.3 For in the last days false prophets and corrupters will multiply, the sheep will turn into wolves, and love will turn into hate.

16.4 For as lawlessness increases, people will hate one another, persecute one another, and betray one another. Then the deceiver of the world will appear, claiming to be a son of God. He will do signs and wonders, and the earth will be handed over to him, and he will commit lawless acts such as have never happened since the beginning of the world.

Scripture: [Matthew 24:24](#); [2 Thessalonians 2:9](#)

16.5 Then all humanity will come to the fire of testing. Many will fall away and be lost, but those who endure in their faith will be saved by the curse itself.

Translator's note. "The curse itself" is literal. Some readers take this to mean Christ, who became a curse for us ([Galatians 3:13](#)). Lake keeps the literal wording.

Scripture: [Matthew 24:10](#); [Matthew 24:13](#); [Matthew 10:22](#)

16.6 And then the signs of the truth will appear: first, the sign of the heavens opening; second, the sign of the sound of the trumpet; and third, the resurrection of the dead,

Translator's note. "Opening" translates a Greek word meaning a spreading out, as of a sign unfolding in the sky. Lake has "spread out."

Scripture: [Matthew 24:30-31](#); [1 Corinthians 15:22](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#)

16.7 though not of all, but as it was said: "The Lord will come, and all his saints with him."

Scripture: [Zechariah 14:5](#); [Matthew 24:30](#); [Matthew 26:64](#)

16.8 Then the world will see the Lord coming on the clouds of heaven.

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