

THE
TEACHING OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES
TO THE NATIONS,
KNOWN AS
THE DIDACHE

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INTRODUCTION

THE *Didache* (DID-a-key), Διδαχή, or *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, is an early Christian text that most scholars date to the first or early second century.

The *Didache* was highly regarded by many early Christian authors and theologians. Athanasius of Alexandria (+373) recommended it to converts, and it had a great influence on the *Apostolic Constitutions* (375). Before the New Testament canon was formally settled in 692, a number of Biblical canons included the *Didache*; John of Damascus (+749) was also a noted supporter.

The text disappeared and was lost for centuries, until it was rediscovered in 1873 by Philotheos Bryennios, Metropolitan of Nicomedia. Today it is usually included among the second-generation Christian writings known as the *Apostolic Fathers*.

The *Didache*'s first section, "The Two Ways," is a treatise on basic Christian theology, morality, and conduct. *Catechumens* (converts in training) were instructed in its teachings before they were baptized.

The second section deals with the administration of several sacraments: baptism, the Eucharist (holy communion), and anointing with oil.

The third section discusses relations among Christians, offering practical instruction in different types of hospitality. It also gives insight into the clerical hierarchy of the early Church, which included familiar institutions like the episcopacy (bishops) and the diaconate (deacons), and also institutions that fell out of use early on, such as prophets (those who spoke in tongues).

It should be noted that, at this time in Christian history, there was no distinct class of clergy who were presbyters (priests). The Christian community was small, and there was not yet a need to delegate a bishop's priestly duties to lower clergy; bishops personally lead the church in worship in each Christian community.

The final section is a brief *apocalypse*, or revelation of the end times. This is notable, as the *Didache* was likely written even before the book of Revelation, which was not universally accepted into the New Testament until the 7th century.

Even though the *Didache* itself did not find its way into the final canon of the New Testament, it is nevertheless a useful manual for Christian living, even today. The basic teachings of the Gospel are condensed into easily-understood pieces of wisdom and instruction, and insight is gained into first-century Christian liturgy and worship.

The *Didache* is a book that all Christians can find profit in. Scripture weaves through the text's clear teachings, demonstrating why the book was so well-loved and appreciated by the early Church.

THE VINE



THE DIDACHE

— I —

THE TWO WAYS

THERE are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two ways.^a The way of life is this. First of all, you shall love the God who made you. Second, love your neighbor as yourself.^b And all things you would not want done to you, do not do to another person.^c

Now the teaching of these words is this. Bless those who curse you,^d and pray for your enemies, and fast for those who persecute you.^e For what credit is it to you, if you love those who love you?^f Do the people of the nations not do the same?^g But you should love those who hate you,^h and you will not have an enemy.ⁱ

Abstain from the desires of the flesh and of the body.^j

If anyone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other cheek to him also,^k and you will be perfect.^l

If anyone compels you to go one mile, go with him for two miles.^m

If anyone takes away your coat, give him your shirt also.ⁿ

If anyone takes away what is yours,^o do not demand its return,^p for you cannot.^q

To anyone who asks something of you, give it to him, and do not ask for it back,^r for the Father desires that gifts be given to all from His own riches.

Blessed is he who gives charitably according to the commandment, for he is blameless.

Woe to him who receives. If a needy man receives charity, he is blameless, but anyone is not in need will be called to account for why he accepted it. And being imprisoned, he will be interrogated concerning his actions, and he will not be released until he has repaid every last penny.^s

Indeed, it has also been said: Let your alms sweat in your hands, until you have discerned to whom you will give.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

THIS is the second commandment of the teaching.

You shall not murder.^t

You shall not commit adultery.^u

You shall not be sexually perverse.^v

You shall not be sexually promiscuous.^w

You shall not steal.^x

You shall not practice magic.^y

^aJer. 21:8; Matt. 7:13. ^bLev. 19:18; Matt. 22:37-39. ^cMatt. 7:12. ^dLuke 6:28; Matt. 5:44. ^eLuke 6:27-28; Matt. 5:44. ^fLuke 6:32. ^gLuke 6:33; Matt. 5:46-47. ^hLuke 6:27; Matt. 5:44. ⁱ1 Pet. 3:13. ^j1 Pet. 2:11. ^kMatt. 5:39; Luke 6:29. ^lMatt. 5:48, 19:21. ^mMatt. 5:41. ⁿMatt. 5:40. ^oMatt. 5:42; Luke 6:30. ^pLuke 6:30. ^qMatt. 5:39. ^rLuke 6:30; Matt. 5:42. ^sMatt. 5:25, 18:34; Luke 12:58. ^tExod. 20:15(13). ^uExod. 20:13(14). ^vLit. "You shall not corrupt boys." ^wDeut. 23:17. ^xExod. 20:14(15). ^yDeut. 18:10.

You shall not practice sorcery.^z

You shall not murder a child by abortion, nor kill a child at birth.

You shall not covet your neighbor's things.^a

You shall not commit perjury.^b

You shall not bear false witness.^c

You shall not speak evil.^d

You shall not bear a grudge.^e

You shall not be double-minded nor double-tongued, for the double tongue is a snare of death.^f

Your words shall not be false or empty, but fulfilled in your actions.

You shall not be greedy,^g nor a swindler, nor a hypocrite, nor bad-tempered, nor proud.

You shall not plot against your neighbor.

You shall not hate any man, but you shall reprove some, and you shall pray for others, and others you shall love more than your own life.^h

THE "FENCES"

MY CHILD, flee from every evil thing, and everything that is like it.

Do not be angry, for anger leads to murder. Do not be jealous, nor argumentative, nor hot-tempered; for all of these things give birth to murder.

My child, do not be lustful, for lust leads to sexual promiscuity. Do not speak obscenely, and do not have wandering eyes; for all of these things give birth to promiscuity.

My child, do not deal in omens, since it leads to idolatry. Do not be an enchanter, nor an astrologer, nor a magician—do not even be around such things; for all of these things give birth to idolatry.

My child, do not be a liar, since it leads to theft. Do not be greedy or vain; for all of these things give birth to theft.

My child, be not a complainer, since it leads to blasphemy. Do not be stubborn nor evil-minded; for all of these things give birth to blasphemy.

Be meek, since the meek shall inherit the earth.ⁱ

Be patient, and merciful, and sincere, and quiet, and kind, and always fearing the words which you have heard.^j

Do not praise yourself, and do not let arrogance enter your soul. Do not join your soul with a pompous person,^k but walk only with the righteous and the humble. Whatever happens to you, accept it as good, knowing that nothing is done without God.

My child, remember him who proclaims to you the word of God. Remember him night and day,^l and honor him as the Lord; for wherever he speaks, the Lord himself is there.

Every day, seek out the company of the saints, that you may find rest in their words.

Do not cause division, but bring peace between those who dispute. Judge righteously.^m Do not favor

^zDeut. 18:10. ^aMatt. 5:40. ^bMatt. 5:42; Luke 6:30. ^cLuke 6:30. ^dMatt. 5:39. ^eLuke 6:30; Matt. 5:42. ^fMatt. 5:25, 18:34; Luke 12:58. ^gExod. 20:15(13). ^hExod. 20:13(14). ⁱLit. "You shall not corrupt boys." ^jDeut. 23:17. ^kExod. 20:14(15). ^lDeut. 18:10. ^mPs. 37:11; Matt. 5:5. ⁿIsa. 66:2. ^oRom. 12:16; Jas. 2:2-3. ^pHeb. 13:7. ^qDeut. 1:16-17; Prov. 31:9.

one side when you reprove others. Do not be double-minded when you consider whether or not a thing should be.

Do not hold out your hand to receive, only to pull your hand back when you should give. If you have gained something through your work, give it away as a ransom for your sins. Do not hesitate to give, nor complain when you give, for you know the good paymaster of your reward.

Do not turn away from anyone who is in need, but share everything with your brother, and do not say that anything is your own.ⁿ For if you all share in the heavenly things, how much more in earthly things?

Do not relax your control over your son or your daughter, but from their youth teach them the fear of God.

Do not give a command in your anger to your servant, who trusts in the same God, lest he ceases to fear the God who is over both of you. For he does not call men according to worldly status, but he comes to those whom the Spirit has prepared.

And you who are servants, be obedient to your masters as to God, in respect and fear.^o

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

Never forsake the Lord's commandments. But you shall guard the things which you have received, neither adding to them nor taking away from them.^p

Confess your sins in church, and do not go to prayer with a guilty conscience.

This is the Way of Life.

THE WAY OF DEATH

BUT the way of death is this. First of all, it is evil and full of curses: murder, adultery, lust, promiscuity, theft, idolatry, magical arts, witchcraft, robbery, false testimony, hypocrisy, duplicity, treachery, pride, malice, stubbornness, greed, foul language, jealousy, arrogance, pride, and boasting.^q

Persecutors of good men, hating truth, loving a lie, not knowing the reward of righteousness, not adhering to the good^r nor to good judgment, alert to evil rather than to good; neither gentle nor patient; loving worthless things,^s pursuing a reward, not having mercy on the poor, not working for the downtrodden, not recognizing the God who made them, murderers of children, corrupters of God's creation, turning away from the needy, oppressing the afflicted, advocates of the rich, unjust judges of the poor—sinful in every way!

May you be delivered, my children, from all these things.

CONCLUSION

BEWARE, lest anyone lead you astray from this way of righteousness, for he teaches apart from God. For if you can bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect; but if you cannot, do as much as you can.^t

ⁿ Acts 4:32. ^o Eph. 6:1-9; Col. 3:18-4:1. ^p Deut. 4:2, 12:32. ^q Matt. 15:19; Rom. 1:29; Gal. 5:20. ^r Rom. 12:9. ^s Ps. 4:2; Isa. 1:23. ^t Epistle of Barnabas 19:8.



— II —

INSTRUCTION FOR CATECHUMENS

CONCERNING FOOD

NOW concerning eating, observe the traditions as best you can. But do not eat meat sacrificed to idols, for it is the worship of dead gods.^u

CONCERNING BAPTISM

CONCERNING baptism, baptize in this way. Having instructed him in all of these teachings, baptize the catechumen in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in running water.^v But if you do not have running water, then baptize in other water. And if you cannot in cold water, use warm. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And before the baptism, let both the baptizer and the catechumen fast, and also any others who are able. And be sure that the catechumen fasts a day or two before.

CONCERNING FASTING

DO NOT let not your fasts fall on the same days as the hypocrites,^w for they fast on Mondays and Thursdays. Keep your fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.

CONCERNING PRAYER

DO NOT pray as the hypocrites either,^x but pray as the Lord commanded in His Gospel:
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one; for thine is the power and the glory unto ages of ages.^y

Pray this way three times each day.

CONCERNING THE EUCHARIST

NOW concerning the eucharistic thanksgiving,^z give thanks in this way. First, as concerning the cup:
We give you thanks, our Father, for the holy vine of your son David,^a which you made known to us through your Son Jesus.^b Yours is the glory unto ages of ages.

Then as regards the broken bread:

We give you thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge^c which you made known to us through your Son Jesus. Yours is the glory unto ages of ages.

As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and being gathered together became one,

^u Acts 15:29. ^v Matt. 28:19. ^w Matt. 6:16. ^x Matt. 6:5ff. ^y Matt. 6:9ff. ^z 1 Cor. 11:23-25. ^a John 15:1. ^b Acts 3:13, 26. ^c John 3:15, 5:26, 6:68ff.

so may your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. For yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ unto ages of ages.

Do not let anyone eat or drink of this Eucharist who has not been baptized into the name of the Lord, for concerning this the Lord has said, “Do not give the holy things to the dogs.”^d

And after you have been filled, give thanks as follows:

We give you thanks, holy Father, for your holy name, which you have made to dwell in our hearts,^e and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which you have made known unto us through your Son Jesus. Yours is the glory unto ages of ages.

You, Almighty Master, created all things^f for your name’s sake, and gave food and drink to men for their enjoyment, that they might give you thanks. And you have given us spiritual food and drink and eternal life through your Son.^g

Most of all, we give you thanks that you are powerful. Yours is the glory unto ages of ages.

Remember, Lord, your Church,^h and deliver it from all evilⁱ and to perfect it in Thy love. Gather it—the sanctified one—together from the four winds^j into your kingdom which you have prepared for it. For yours is the power and the glory unto ages of ages.

May grace come and may this world pass away.^k Hosanna to the God of David.^l If any man is holy, let him come; if any man is not, let him repent. *Mar’anatha.*^m Amen.

But permit the prophets to offer thanksgiving as much as they desire.

CONCERNING THE OINTMENT

AND concerning the ointment, give thanks as follows:

We give you thanks, our Father, for the fragrant ointment which you have made known to us through your Son Jesus. Yours is the glory unto ages of ages. Amen.

THE APPROVED TEACHER

W^HOEVER comes and teaches you all these things that have been taught before, receive him. But if the teacher himself turns aside and teaches a different doctrine that subverts what has been taught before, do not listen to him.ⁿ If his teaching fosters righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord.^o

^dMatt. 7:6. ^eJohn 1:14, 6:56-57. ^fRev. 4:11. ^gJohn 6:27. ^hMatt. 16:18. ⁱJohn 17:15. ^jMatt. 24:31. ^kRev. 22:20. ^lMatt. 21:9, 15. ^mHebrew: “Our Lord has come.” 1 Cor. 16:22. ⁿGal. 1:6-9. ^oMatt. 10:40; John 13:20.

THE MYSTIC SUPPER



— III —

LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY

APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

CONCERNING apostles and prophets,^p act according to the Gospel's teaching.^q Receive every apostle as the Lord.^r He should not stay for more than a single day, or two days if necessary. But if he remains for three days, he is a false prophet. When he leaves, let the apostle receive nothing except bread, until he finds a place to stay. But if he asks for money, he is a false prophet.^t

Do not test or judge any prophet who speaks in the Spirit. Every other sin will be forgiven, but this sin will not be forgiven.^s And not everyone who speaks in the Spirit is a prophet, but only he who follows the ways of the Lord. From his behavior, then, you will know a false prophet from a true prophet.^t

Any prophet who orders a meal in Spirit will not eat from it, but if he does eat of it, he is a false prophet.

Any prophet who teaches the truth, but does not do the things he teaches, is a false prophet.

Every true prophet, if he performs a worldly mystery of the Church, but does not teach others to do likewise, he must not be judged by you. He has his judgment in the presence of God, as with the prophets of old.

If anyone says in the Spirit, "Give me money," do not listen to him.^u But if he tells you to give to others who are in need, let no one judge him.

HOSPITALITY TO TRAVELERS

RECEIVE everyone who comes in the name of the Lord.^v Examine him and learn the nature of his situation.

If he is only passing through, help him as much as you can, but he must not stay with you more than two or three days.

If he wishes to settle with you and knows a trade, let him work and earn his bread.^w

If he does not know a trade, use your judgment to decide how he should live as a Christian among you, but not in idleness. If he will not do this, he is trafficking upon Christ.^x Beware of such men.

SUPPORTING GOD'S MINISTERS

EVERY true prophet who desires to settle among you is worthy of his food. Likewise, a true teacher, like the worker, deserves his food.^y

Take every firstfruit of the winepress and of the threshing floor, of your oxen and of your sheep, and give as the firstfruit to the prophets, for they are your high priests.^z But if you do not have a prophet, give your firstfruits to the poor.

^p 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 3:5. ^q Matt. 7:15ff, 10:40-41; Luke 10:4ff. ^r Matt. 10:40; John 13:20. ^s Matt. 12:31. ^t 2 Pet. 2:1; John 4:1. ^u Matt. 10:8. ^v Ps. 118:26; Matt. 21:9. ^w 2 Thess. 3:10; Acts 18:3. ^x 1 Tim. 6:5. ^y Matt 10:10; 1 Tim. 5:18. ^z Deut. 18:1-5.

If you make bread, take the firstfruit and give according to the commandment. Likewise, when you open a jug of wine or oil, take the firstfruit and give to the prophets. And so with money, and clothing, and every possession—take the firstfruit, as it seems appropriate to you, and give according to the commandment.

THE SACRIFICE

GATHER together each Sunday,^a break bread and give thanks, first confessing your sins, that your sacrifice may be pure.

And let no man, having a disagreement with his brother, join you until they have been reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be defiled.^b For it was this sacrifice that was spoken of by the Lord: “In every place and at every time offer me a pure sacrifice;^c for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the nations.”^d

CHURCH LEADERS

APPPOINT for yourselves bishops and deacons who are worthy of the Lord: men who are meek and not lovers of money, and who are honest^e and proven. For they also perform the service of the prophets and teachers.^f Therefore, do not hold them in contempt, for they are honorable men along with the prophets and teachers.

COMMUNITY DISCIPLINE

REPROVE one another, not in anger but in peace, as you find in the Gospel. Shun anyone who has sinned against his neighbor; do not say a word to him until he repents.^g But say your prayers, and give your alms, and do everything according to the Gospel of our Lord.^h

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^aRev. 1:10. ^bMatt. 5:23. ^cMal. 1:11. ^dMal. 1:14. ^e1 Tim. 3:2-13; Tit. 1:5-9. ^fEph. 4:11-12. ^gMatt. 5:22-26, 18:15-35. ^hMatt. 6:1-15.

— IV —
THE LORD IS COMING

WATCH over your life. Do not let your lamps burn out, nor your waist be ungirded,ⁱ but be ready, for you do not know when our Lord is coming.^j And gather together frequently, seeking what is necessary for your souls, for all your years of faith will count for nothing unless you are perfected in the last days.^k

In the last days, false prophets and corrupters will multiply,^l and the sheep will turn into wolves, and love will be turned into hate.^m As lawlessness increases, men will hate and persecute and betray one another.ⁿ And then the Deceiver of the world will appear as a son of God, and will do signs and wonders,^o and the earth will be delivered into his hands. He will commit abominations which have never been seen since the world began.^p Then all mankind will come to the fire of testing,^q and many will fail and perish.^r But those who endure in their faith will be saved^s by him who was accursed.^t

And then shall the signs of the truth appear: first a sign of a rift in the heavens,^u then a sign of a voice of a trumpet,^v and thirdly the resurrection of the dead.^w Yet not of all, but as it was said:

The Lord shall come and all his saints with him.^x

Then shall the world see the Lord coming
upon the clouds of heaven with power
and dominion^y to repay each man
according to his works,^z with
justice, before all men
and the angels.

AMEN.



ⁱLuke 12:35. ^jMatt. 24:42, 44; Mark 13:35; Luke 12:40. ^kEpistle of Barnabas 4:9. ^lMatt. 24:11. ^mMatt. 24:12. ⁿMatt. 24:10; 2 Pet. 3:3. ^oMark 13:22; 2 Thess. 2:4, 9. ^pDan. 12:1; Mark 13:19; 2 John 7; Rev. 12:9, 13:2, 19:20. ^q1 Pet. 4:12. ^rMatt. 24:10, 13. ^sMark 13:13. ^tGal. 3:13. ^uMatt. 24:30. ^vMatt. 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:16. ^w1 Cor. 15:52. ^xZech. 14:5. ^yMark 13:26. ^zPs. 62:12; Matt. 16:27.

THE TEN VIRGINS



EARLY HYMNS & PRAYERS

TO SUPPLEMENT the ancient Christian teachings in the Didache, we have included below a selection of early Christian hymns and prayers, dating to the first few generations of the Church. Timeless in their beauty, many of these are still used and still inspire Christians today.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST

1st – 3rd century

GLORY to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.
We praise you, we bless you, we worship you, we glorify you, we give thanks to you for your great glory.

O Lord, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty, O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

O Lord God, Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

You who take away the sins of the world, accept our prayer.

You who sit at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are holy, you alone are the Lord, O Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

MORNING HYMN

1st – 3rd century

EVERY day I will bless you; I will praise your name forever; yes, forever and ever.
In your goodness, O Lord, keep me from sin today.

You are blessed, O Lord, the God of our fathers,

Your name is praised and glorified forever. Amen.

EVENING HYMN

1st – 2nd century

O JOYFUL Light of the holy glory of the immortal Father,
the heavenly, the holy, the blessed Jesus Christ,
now that we have come to the setting of the sun, and see the light of evening,
we praise the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: God.
It is right at all times to worship you with joyful voices,
O Son of God and Giver of life: For which the whole world glorifies you.

EASTER HYMN

2nd – 3rd century

CHRIST is risen: Hades is in ruins.
 Christ is risen: the demons are fallen.
 Christ is risen: the angels rejoice.
 Christ is risen: the tombs are empty.
 Christ is risen from the dead indeed,
 the first among those who have fallen asleep.
 Glory and power are his forever and ever. Amen.

ANAPHORA HYMN

2nd – 3rd century

HOLY, holy, holy Lord of Hosts,
 Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
 Hosanna in the highest!
 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
 Hosanna in the highest!

COMMUNION HYMN

4th century

THIS is his blood, who took flesh of the holy Virgin: Jesus Christ.
 This is his blood, who was born of the God-bearing holy one: Jesus Christ.
 This is God's blood, who was seen by men and from whom demons fled: Jesus Christ.
 This is his blood, who offered himself a sacrifice for our sins: Jesus Christ.

A PRAYER OF THE
NEWLY-BAPTIZED*4th century*

ALmighty God, Father of Christ your Son, give me a clean body, a pure heart, a watchful mind, and knowledge free from error. May your Holy Spirit come to me and bring me truth—yes, to the fullness of truth—through your Christ. The glory is yours, through him, in the Holy Spirit, forever and ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER OF ST. IGNATIUS
AT HIS MARTYRDOM*AD 107*

IAM the wheat of God. May I be ground up by the teeth of the wild beasts until I become the fine bread of Christ. My sinful passions are crucified, there is no burning in my flesh. A stream murmurs and flows deep down inside me. It says: Come to the Father.

DOXOLOGY

YOU are due praise,
You are due hymns,
You are due glory:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Forever and ever and ever.
Amen.

GLORY TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS
AMEN