

**EARLY CHURCH WRITINGS**

**THE DIDACHE**

**OR, THE TEACHING OF THE  
LORD TO THE GENTILES BY  
THE TWELVE APOSTLES**

## **EDITOR'S PREFACE**

The Didache was probably written some time in the late first century. In that time period, most of the original Apostles had died and the canon of scripture had not been fully agreed on yet. In other words, many people were still not sure exactly which epistles and gospels were really inspired New Testament scripture, and which were not. It was only later on that the Leadership of the church decided more or less unanimously which books would make up the canon of scripture.

The Didache is sort of a handbook for early Christians - especially those who did not have copies of any of the gospels or epistles. It contains probably what someone like Apostle Peter, or James would have taught had they started a church in some town far from Jerusalem.

## THE DIDACHE

1. There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two ways. The way of life is this. First of all, you must love the God who made you; secondly, your neighbour as yourself. All things you wouldn't have befall yourself, neither do to another.

Now of these words the doctrine is this. Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies and fast for those who persecute you; for what thanks is it, if you love those who love you? Don't even the Gentiles do the same? But you love those who hate you, and you will not have any enemies.

Abstain from fleshly and bodily lusts. If any man give you a blow on your right cheek, turn to him the other also, and you will be perfect; if a man impresses you to go with him one mile, go with him two; if a man takes away your cloak, give him your coat also; if a man takes from you something of yours, don't ask for it back, for neither are you able. To every man who asks of you, give, and don't ask for it back; for the Father desires that gifts be given to all from His own bounties.

Blessed is he who gives according to the commandment; for he is guiltless. Woe to him who receives; for, if a man receives having need, he is guiltless; but he who has no need shall give satisfaction why and wherefore he received; and being put in confinement he shall be examined concerning the deeds he has done, and he shall not come out from there until he has given back the last farthing. Yes, as touching this also it is said; Let your alms sweat into your hands, until you will have learnt to whom to give.

2. This is the second commandment of the teaching. You must do no murder, you must not commit adultery, you must not corrupt boys, you must not commit fornication, you must not steal, you must not deal in magic, you must do no sorcery, you must not murder a child by abortion nor kill them when born, you must not covet your neighbour's goods, you must not perjure yourself, you must not bear false witness, you must not speak evil, you must not cherish a grudge, you must not be double-minded nor double-tongued; for the double tongue is a snare of death. Your word shall not be false nor empty, but fulfilled by action. You must not be avaricious nor a plunderer nor a hypocrite nor ill-tempered nor proud. You must not entertain an evil design against your neighbour. You must not hate any man, but some you must reprove, and for others you must pray, and others you must love more than your life.

3. My child, flee from every evil and everything that resembles it. Don't be angry, for anger leads to murder, nor jealous nor contentious nor wrathful; for of all these things murders are engendered.

My child, don't be lustful, for lust leads to fornication, neither foul-speaking neither with uplifted eyes; for of all these things adulteries are engendered.

My child, be no dealer in omens, since it leads to idolatry, nor an enchanter nor an astrologer nor a magician, neither be willing to look at them; for from all these things idolatry is engendered.

My child, don't be a liar, since lying leads to theft, neither avaricious neither vainglorious; for from all these things thefts are engendered.

My child, don't be a murmurer, since it leads to blasphemy, neither self-willed neither a thinker of evil thoughts; for from all these things blasphemies are engendered.

But be meek, since the meek shall inherit the earth. Be longsuffering and pitiful and guileless and quiet and kindly and always fearing the words which you have heard. You must not exalt yourself, neither must you admit boldness into your soul. Your soul shall not cleave together with the lofty, but with the righteous and humble must you walk. The accidents that befall you, you should receive as good, knowing that nothing is done without God.

4. My child, you must remember the one who speaks to you the word of God night and day, and honour him as the Lord; for whenever the Lordship speaks, there is the Lord. Moreover you must seek out day by day the persons of the saints, so that you may find rest in their words. You should not make a schism, but you must pacify those who contend; you must judge righteously, you must not make a difference in a person to reprove him for transgressions. You must not doubt whether a thing shall be or not be.

Don't be found holding out your hands to receive, but drawing them in as to giving. If you have ought passing through your hands, you will give a ransom for your sins. You must not hesitate to give, neither should you murmur when giving; for you should know who is the good paymaster of your reward. You must not turn away from the one who is in want, but should make your brother partaker in all things, and must not say that anything is your own. For if you are fellow-partakers in those things that are imperishable, how much rather in the things which are perishable?

You must not withhold your hand from your son or from your daughter, but from their youth you must teach them the fear of God. You must not command your bond servant or your handmaid in your bitterness, who trusts in the same God as yourself, lest haply they should cease to fear the God who is over both of you; for He comes, not to call men with respect of persons, but He comes to those whom the Spirit has prepared. But you, servants, shall be subject to your masters, as to a type of God, in shame and fear.

You must hate all hypocrisy, and everything that is not pleasing to the Lord. You must never forsake the commandments of the Lord; but must keep those things which you have received, neither adding to them nor taking away from them. In church you must confess your transgressions, and must not betake yourself to prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life.

5. But the way of death is this. First of all, it is evil and full of a curse; murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magical arts, witchcraft, plundering, false witnessing, hypocrisies, doubleness of heart, treachery, pride, malice, stubbornness, covetousness, foul-speaking, jealousy, boldness, exaltation, boastfulness; persecutors of good men, hating truth, loving a lie, not perceiving the reward of righteousness, not cleaving to the good nor to righteous judgment, not wakeful for what is good but for what is evil; from whom gentleness and forbearance stand aloof; loving vain things, pursuing a recompense, not pitying the poor man, not toiling for the

one who is oppressed with toil, not recognising Him who made them, murderers of children, corrupters of the creatures of God, turning away from the one who is in want, oppressing those who are afflicted, advocates of the wealthy, unjust judges of the poor, altogether sinful. May you be delivered, my children, from all these things.

6. See lest any man lead you astray from this way of righteousness, for he teaches you apart from God. For if you are able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect; but if you are not able, do what you are able.

Concerning eating, bear what you are able; yet abstain by all means from meat sacrificed to idols; for it is the worship of dead gods.

7. But concerning baptism, thus shall you baptise. Having first recited all these things, baptise in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in living (running) water. But if you don't have living water, then baptise in other water; and if you are not able in cold, then in warm. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head thrice in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the one who baptises and the one to be baptised fast, and any others also who are able; and you must order the one who is to be baptised to fast a day or two before.

8. Don't let your fasting be with the hypocrites, for they fast on the second and the fifth day of the week; but keep your fast on the fourth and on the preparation (the sixth) day. Neither pray as the hypocrites, but as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, thus pray you:

“Our Father, who are in heaven, Your name be hallowed; Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in Heaven, so also on Earth; give us today our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors; and don't lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one; for Yours is the power and the glory for ever and ever.”

Three times in the day pray like this.

9. But as touching the eucharistic thanksgiving give thanks thus. First, as regards the cup:

“We give You thanks, O our Father, for the holy vine of Your son David, which You made known to us through Your Son Jesus; Yours is the glory for ever and ever.”

Then as regards the broken bread:

“We give You thanks, O our Father, for the life and knowledge which You made known to us through Your Son Jesus; Yours is the glory for ever and ever. As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and being gathered from the ends of the earth into Your kingdom; for Yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever and ever.”

But let no one eat or drink of this eucharistic thanksgiving, but those who have been baptised into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord has said: Don't give what is holy to the dogs.

10. After you are satisfied give thanks thus:

“We give You thanks, Holy Father, for Your holy name, which You have made to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which You have made known to us through Your Son Jesus; Yours is the glory for ever and ever.

“You, Almighty Master, created all things for Your name’s sake, and gave food and drink to men for enjoyment, so that they might render thanks to You; but bestowed upon us spiritual food and drink and eternal life through Your Son. Before all things we give You thanks that You are powerful; Yours is the glory for ever and ever.

“Remember, Lord, Your Church to deliver it from all evil and to perfect it in Your love; and gather it together from the four winds - even the Church which has been sanctified - into Your kingdom which You have prepared for it; for Yours is the power and the glory for ever and ever.

“May grace come and may this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. If any man is holy, let him come; if any man is not, let him repent. Maran Atha. Amen.”

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

11. Therefore, whoever comes and teaches you all these things that have been said before, receive him; but if the teacher himself is perverted and teaches a different doctrine resulting in the destruction of these, don’t hear him. If it results in the increase of righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord.

Concerning the apostles and prophets, so do according to the ordinance of the Gospel. Let every apostle, when he comes to you, be received as the Lord; but he shall not abide more than a single day, or if there be need, a second day. If he abides three days, he is a false prophet. When he departs let the apostle receive nothing except bread, until he finds shelter; but if he ask for money, he is a false prophet.

Any prophet speaking in the Spirit, you shall not try nor discern; for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven. Yet not every one who speaks in the Spirit is a prophet, but only if he has the ways of the Lord. From his ways therefore the false prophet and the prophet can be recognised.

No prophet when he orders a table in the Spirit shall eat of it; otherwise he is a false prophet. Every prophet teaching the truth, if he doesn’t do what he teaches, is a false prophet.

Every prophet approved and found true, if he does anything as an outward mystery typical of the Church, and yet doesn’t teach you to do all that he himself does, shall not be judged before you. He has his judgement in the presence of God; for the prophets of old time also did the same thing.

Whoever shall say in the Spirit, Give me silver or anything else, you shall not listen to him; but if he tells you to give on behalf of others who are in want, let no man judge him.

12. Let every one who comes in the name of the Lord be received; and then when you have tested him you shall know him, for you shall have understanding on the right hand and on the left. If the comer is a traveller, assist him, so far as you are able; but he shall not stay with you more than two or three days, if necessary. But if he wishes to settle with you, being a craftsman, let him work for his bread and eat it. But if he has no craft, according to your wisdom provide how he shall live as a Christian among you, but not in idleness. If he will not do this, he is trafficking upon Christ. Beware of such men.

13. Every true prophet desiring to settle among you is worthy of his food. In the same way a true teacher is also worthy, like the workman, of his food. Every first-fruit then of the produce of the wine-vat and of the threshing-floor, of your oxen and of your sheep, you must take and give as the first-fruit to the prophets; for they are your chief-priests. But if you don't have a prophet, give them to the poor. If you make bread, take the first-fruit and give according to the commandment. In the same way, when you open a jar of wine or of oil, take the first-fruit and give to the prophets; yes and of money and raiment and every possession take the first-fruit, as shall seem good to you, and give according to the commandment.

14. On the Lord's own day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks, first confessing your transgressions, so that your sacrifice may be pure. Let no man who has a dispute with his fellow join your assembly until they have been reconciled, so that your sacrifice may not be defiled; for it was this sacrifice that was spoken of by the Lord; "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."

15. Therefore, appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are meek and not lovers of money, and true and approved; for to you they also perform the service of the prophets and teachers. Therefore don't despise them; for they are your honourable men along with the prophets and teachers.

Reprove one another, not in anger but in peace, as you find in the Gospel; and let no one speak to any who has gone wrong towards his neighbour, nor let him hear a word from you, until he repents. But in your prayers and your alms giving and all your deeds, do as you find it in the Gospel of our Lord.

16. Be watchful for your life; don't let your lamps be quenched and your loins ungirded, but be ready; for you don't know the hour in which our Lord comes. You must gather yourselves together frequently, seeking what is fitting for your souls; for the whole time of your faith shall not profit you, if you are not perfected at the last season.

In the last days the false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate. For as lawlessness increases, they shall hate one another and shall persecute and betray.

Then the world-deceiver shall appear as a son of God; and shall work signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands; and he shall do unholy things which have never been since the world began. Then all created mankind shall come to

the fire of testing, and many shall be offended and perish; but those who endure in their faith shall be saved by the Curse Himself.

Then shall the signs of the truth appear; first a sign of a rift in the heaven, then a sign of a voice of a trumpet, and thirdly a resurrection of the dead; yet not of all, but as it was said: The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.