

DIDACHE

THE TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

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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.

As a catechism for new converts, a manual for basic Christian living, and a liturgical guide, the *Didache* was highly regarded by many early Christian authors and theologians. Before the New Testament canon was formally settled in AD 692, a number of Bibles even included the *Didache*.

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

Though the *Didache* did not find its way into the final canon of the New Testament, it remains a useful guide for Christian living, even today. The basic teachings of the Gospel are condensed into

simple pieces of wisdom, and insight is gained into first-century Christian liturgy and worship.

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





THE DIDACHE

— I —

THE TWO WAYS

1 **T**HERE 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

^aJer. 21:8; Mt. 7:13. ^bLev. 19:18; Mt. 22:37-39. ^cMt. 7:12. ^dLk. 6:28; Mt. 5:44.

^eLk. 6:27-28; Mt. 5:44. ^fLk. 6:32. ^gLk. 6:33; Mt. 5:46-47. ^hLk. 6:27;

ⁱMt. 5:44. ^j1 Pet. 3:13. ^k1 Pet. 2:11.

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.

^kMt. 5:39; Lk. 6:29. ^lMt. 5:48, 19:21. ^mMt. 5:41. ⁿMt. 5:40. ^oMt. 5:42; Lk. 6:30. ^pLk. 6:30. ^qMt. 5:39. ^rLk. 6:30; Mt. 5:42. ^sMt. 5:25, 18:34; Lk. 12:58.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

2 **T**HIS 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

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 ful-
filled 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.

^tEx. 20:15(13). ^uEx. 20:13(14). ^vLit. "You shall not corrupt boys." ^wDeut. 23:17.

^xEx. 20:14(15). ^yDeut. 18:10. ^zDeut. 18:10. ^aEx. 20:17. ^bZech. 5:3 LXX.

^cEx. 20:16; Mt. 5:33. ^dProv. 20:13(16) LXX. ^eProv. 12:28; Zech. 7:10.

^fProv. 21:6; Jas. 3:5. ^gEx. 20:17.

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”

3 **M**Y 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;

^hJude 22.

for all of these things give birth to blasphemy.

Be meek, for 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.

4 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 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

ⁱPs. 37:11; Mt. 5:5. ^jIsa. 66:2. ^kRom. 12:16; Jas. 2:2-3. ^lHeb. 13:7.

^mDeut. 1:16-17; Prov. 31:9.

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

ⁿActs 4:32. ^oEph. 6:1-9; Col. 3:18-4:1. ^pDeut. 4:2, 12:32.



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

5 **B**UT 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.

^qMatt. 15:19; Rom. 1:29; Gal. 5:20. ^rRom. 12:9. ^sPs. 4:2; Isa. 1:23.

- 6 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

— II —

INSTRUCTIONS 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

- 7 **C**ONCERNING 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,

^t*Epistle of Barnabas 19:8.* ^u*Acts 15:29.* ^v*Matt. 28:19.*

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

- 8 **D**O 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

^wMatt. 6:16. ^xMatt. 6:5ff.

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

9 **N**ow 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, so may your Church be gathered together from

^yMt. 6:9ff. ^z1 Cor. 11:23-25. ^aJn. 15:1. ^bActs 3:13, 26. ^cJn. 3:15, 5:26, 6:68ff.

THE MYSTIC SUPPER



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

10 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 thou hast 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. Gath-

^dMt. 7:6. ^eJn. 1:14, 6:56-57. ^fRev. 4:11. ^gJn. 6:27. ^hMt. 16:18. ⁱJn. 17:15.

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