

The Didache

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

1 The Way of Life (Practices)

The first part of the Way of Life is to practice righteousness. Love God who made you; second, love your neighbor as yourself. And whatever you do not want done to you, do not do to anyone else. Now the meaning of these words is this: Bless them that curse you, pray for your enemies, and fast for those who persecute you. For what is the difference if you love those who love you? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? If you love those who hate you, you will not have an enemy.

Abstain from fleshly and bodily desires. If a man strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also, and you will be perfect. If a man forces you to go one mile with him, go with him two. If a man takes away your coat, give him your shirt also. If a man takes away something of yours, do not demand it back, for you cannot.

Give to everyone in need without asking them to repay; for the Father desires that gifts be given to everyone from His own gifts. Blessed is he that gives according to this command; for he is innocent. Woe to him who receives; if a man receives because he is in need, he is innocent, but he who has no need shall stand trial as to why he took. He will be imprisoned and will not be released until he has paid back the last penny. Remember it is said,

Let your alms burn holes in your pockets until you have found someone worthy to give it to.¹

¹ Not anxious to just spend money but anxious to help a Christian who is truly in need.

2 The Way of Life (Avoidances)

The second part of the Way of Life is to avoid sin. Do not murder, commit adultery, corrupt boys, commit fornication, steal, practice magic, practice sorcery,² murder a child by abortion nor kill them when born, covet your neighbor's goods, perjure yourself, bear false witness, speak evil, nor hold a grudge. You shall not be double-minded nor double-tongued; for the double tongue is a deadly snare. Your word shall not be false or vain but fulfilled by action. Do not be greedy, a plunderer, a hypocrite, ill-tempered, nor proud. Do not entertain an evil design against your neighbor. You shall not hate any man, but some you shall reprove, and for some you shall pray, and some you shall love more than your life.

² Or use enchantments.

3 Why These Things are Evil

Flee from every evil and even things that resemble evil. Do not be hot-tempered for anger leads to murder. Being jealous, contentious, or wrathful also leads to murder. Do not be lustful for lust leads to fornication. Foul-speaking and the lifting up of the eyes leads to adultery. Do not deal in omens since that leads to idolatry. Do not deal with enchanters, astrologers, or magicians, do not even look at their craft, for those things also lead to idolatry. Do not be a liar since lying leads to theft. Do not be greedy or haughty for they also lead to theft. Do not murmur since it leads to blasphemy. Do not be self-willed or a thinker of evil thoughts for these things also lead to blasphemy. Be meek, since the meek shall inherit the earth. Be long-suffering, merciful, guileless,³ quiet, and good. Always revere the words that you have heard. Do not exalt yourself or admit arrogance into your soul. Do not associate with the proud, but with the righteous and humble. Consider the accidents that befall you as good, knowing that nothing happens without God's knowledge.

³ Not arrogant, deceitful, or being a hypocrite, but comfortable just being yourself, real, unpretending.

4 Tithing and Giving

Remember the one who teaches you the word of God and honor him as the Lord, day and night. For wherever the Lord's nature is spoken of, there He is. Each day seek out the faces of the saints, so you can find rest in their words. Do not make schisms but reconcile those who contend. Judge righteously, and do not show partiality when you reprove a person for transgressions. Do not worry⁴ whether a thing shall be or not. Do not be found holding out your hands to receive but drawing them in when it comes to giving. What you have, give as a ransom for your sins.⁵ Do not hesitate to give, or murmur when giving, because you know He will reward you. Do not turn the needy away, but make your brother a partaker in all things, and do not say that anything is your own. For if you are fellow partakers in what is imperishable, how much more in the things which are perishable? Do not withhold your hand from your son or from your daughter, but from their youth teach them the fear of God. Do not command your bondservant or your handmaid in bitterness, who trusts in the same God as you do, lest they should cease to fear God who is over you both. For He came, not to call men with partiality, but those the Spirit prepared. But servants, be subject unto your masters, as God's representative, in modesty and fear. Hate all hypocrisy, and everything that is not pleasing to the Lord. Never forsake the commandments of the Lord; but keep the things that you received. Do not add to or take away from them. Confess your transgressions in church, and do not come to prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life.

⁴ Or doubt

⁵ Use your wealth to help the families of repentant sinners. It is not paying for anyone's sins.

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5 The Way of Death

The Way of Death is evil and full of curses, murder, adultery, lust, fornication, theft, idolatry, magical arts, enchantment, robbery, false witness, hypocrisy, doubleness of heart, treachery, pride, malice, stubbornness, covetousness, foul-speaking, jealousy, arrogance, exaltation, and boastfulness. They persecute good men, hate truth, love lies, do not perceive the reward of righteousness, do not adhere to good or righteous judgment, lie awake not for good, but for what is evil; from whom gentleness and patience are far away. They love vanity, seek reward, do not pity the poor, do not toil for the oppressed, ignore their maker, murder children, corrupt God's creatures, turn away the needy, and oppress the afflicted. They are advocates of the wealthy, unjust judges of the poor, altogether sinful. May you be delivered from all these things.

6 Yoke of the Lord

Do not let any man lead you astray from the Way of Righteousness, because this will lead you away from God. 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 can. But concerning food, bear what you can; but abstain by all means from meat sacrificed to idols; for it is the worship of dead gods.

7 Baptism

Concerning baptism, baptize this way: After first reciting all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if you do not have living water, then baptize in other water; and if you are not able in cold, then in warm.⁶ 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. But before the baptism let the baptizer and the one who is to be baptized, and any others also who are able, fast; and you must order the one that is baptized to fast a day or two beforehand.⁷

⁶ Not lukewarm water. Compare to Revelation 3:16

⁷ Fasting from normal activity. Take off work, pray, make sure you understand and fully accept what is required to become a Christian. This may or may not include fasting from food.

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8 Fasting

Your fasts must not be on the same days as the hypocrites, for they fast on Monday and Thursday; but keep your fast on Wednesday and on the preparation (the sixth) day.⁸ Do not pray as the hypocrites do, but as the Lord commanded in His Gospel:

Our Father, who is in heaven, may your name be revered; Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debt, as we also forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one; for Yours is the power and the glory for ever and ever.

(Compare Matthew 6:7-13)

Pray three times a day.⁹

⁸ People should not be able to mistake us as being part of a cult. We “fast” the normal things that we should in order to be able to attend church on Wednesday evening and prepare for Sunday church on the day before, just as Jews would prepare before Passover by putting away secular things that might interfere with attendance. Apparently, heretics have services on Tuesday and Fridays.

⁹ Before meals? The Jewish hours of prayer seem to have been the third, sixth, and ninth hours (9:00 AM, noon, and 3:00 PM).

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9 Communion

As touching the eucharistic thanksgiving,¹⁰ give thanks this way:
First, the cup:

We thank You, our Father, for the holy vine of Your servant David, which You have made known unto us through Your Son Jesus; Yours is the glory forever and ever.

Then the broken bread:

Father, we thank You for the life and knowledge which You have made known unto us through Your Son Jesus; Yours is the glory forever and ever. As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and being gathered together became one,¹¹ 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 forever and ever.

Only those who have been baptized into the name of the Lord should be allowed to eat or drink of this eucharistic thanksgiving, for concerning this the Lord has said,

Give not that which is holy to the dogs. (Matthew 7:6)

¹⁰ This is referencing the Greek word “Koinonia” which Paul used in 1 Corinthians 11:24. It just means “a thanksgiving” but in Christian circles came to mean the thanksgiving that Christians have when we take communion and have a fellowship meal.

¹¹ This may be referring to Nero’s persecution which caused Christianity to spread worldwide.

10 Prayer After the Eucharistic Meal

After you are satisfied, give thanks this way:

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

Almighty Master, You have created all things for Your name's sake, and given food and drink to men to enjoy, that they might thank You. You granted us spiritual food and drink and eternal life through Your Son. Before all things we thank You that You are mighty; Yours is the glory forever and ever. Lord, remember Your Church, deliver it from all evil and perfect it in Your love. 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 forever 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. Maranatha.¹² Amen.

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

¹² Come Quickly!

11 False Apostles, Prophets, & Teachers

Whoever comes and teaches you all these things that have been said before, receive him; but if the teacher turns away from it and teaches a different doctrine to their destruction, do not listen to him. But if the teaching promotes righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord. Concerning the apostles and prophets, follow the ordinance of the Gospel. Let every apostle, when he comes to you, be received as the Lord; but he shall not stay more than a day, or if necessary, the next day also. But if he stays three days, he is a false prophet. And when he leaves let the apostle take nothing except enough food until he finds shelter; but if he asks for money, he is a false prophet.

Do not try to examine any prophet speaking in the Spirit.¹³ For every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin will not be forgiven. Not everyone that speaks in the Spirit is a prophet, but only if he obeys the ways of the Lord. The false prophet and the true prophet shall be known by their ways. No prophet when he orders a meal in the Spirit shall eat of it; otherwise, he is a false prophet. Every prophet teaching the truth, if he does not 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, but does not teach you to do what he himself does, shall not be judged by you; he will have his judgment in the presence of God; for the old prophets also did this. And whoever says in the Spirit, “Give me money” or anything else, you shall not listen to him; but if he tells you to give on behalf of others that are in want, let no man judge him.

¹³ If a “prophet” asks for money or food even partly for himself, does not teach proper doctrine, or does not practice what he preaches, he is a false prophet.

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12 False Brethren

Let everyone that comes in the name of the Lord be received; and then when you have tested him you will know him, for you shall have understanding on the right hand and on the left. If the one who comes is a traveler, help him all you can; but he must not stay with you more than two days or if necessary three. But if he wishes to settle among you, and has a trade, let him work for a living. But if he has no skill, according to your wisdom, provide how he shall live among you, but not in idleness just because he is a Christian. If he will not do this, he is stealing from Christ. Beware of such men.

13 First Fruits and the Tithe

But every true prophet desiring to settle among you is worthy of his food. In like manner a true teacher is also, like the workman, worthy of his food. The first fruits of the produce of the wine-vat and of the threshing-floor, of your oxen and of your sheep, you shall take and give as the first fruits to the prophets; for they are your chief priests. But if you do not have a prophet, give them to the poor. If you make bread, take the first fruits, and give according to the commandment. In like manner, when you open a jar of wine or of oil, take the first fruits and give to the prophets; and of money and clothes and every possession take the first fruits, as shall seem good to you, and give according to the commandment.

14 Attend Church

On the Lord's own day, gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks, first confessing your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. Let no man, having his dispute with another, join your assembly until they have been reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be defiled. For this is the 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. (Malachi 1:11)

15 Bishops and Deacons

Therefore, appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are meek and not greedy, tried and true; for unto you they also perform the service of the prophets and teachers. Do not despise them; for they are your honorable men along with the prophets and teachers.

Do not reprove one another in anger, but in peace, as you find in the Gospel. Do not allow anyone to speak to those who have wronged their neighbor, neither let him hear a word from you, until he repents. Do your prayers, alms-giving, and all your deeds as you find it in the Gospel of our Lord.

16 Last Days

Be watchful for your life; do not let your lamps go out or be caught unprepared but be ready; for you know not the hour when our Lord will come.¹⁴ Gather together often to seek what benefits your souls; for the whole time of your faith will not profit you, if you are not made perfect at the last time.¹⁵ For in the last days the false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep will be turned into wolves, and love will be turned into hate. For as lawlessness increases, they shall hate and persecute and betray one another. And then the world-deceiver will appear as a son of God; and shall work signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands; and he will do unholy things, which have never been since the world began. Then all created mankind will pass into the fiery trial, and many will fall away and perish; but those that endure in their faith will be saved by the Curse itself. Then the signs of the truth will appear.

First a sign of a rift in heaven, then a sign of the sound of a trumpet, and third, a resurrection of the dead; but not of all, because it was said:

The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him.

(Jude 1:14; Enoch 1:9)

Then the world will see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.¹⁶

¹⁴ The Lord's coming for us, in the Rapture, could occur at any time.

¹⁵ We do not know when the rapture will occur but when it does, we will be made perfect. The word translated "perfect" here is *teleioo*, meaning to be made perfect, complete, or be glorified. We will be made perfect when we receive our glorified bodies. Paul uses *teleioo* in this way in Hebrews 11:40.

¹⁶ The order of events is: The people who "gather together" and truly get saved will be perfected (raptured) at the "last time." Then the Antichrist will appear and start the "time of fiery trial" which ends with the resurrection of tribulation saints when the Lord returns with His previously raptured saints.