The Didache

Anonymous · Probably late 1st or early 2nd century · Text: ANF translation (1886)

Who wrote it

The Didache is a short, anonymous manual for Christian communities, probably written in Syria or Palestine within a generation or two of the apostles. Known to early writers but then lost, it was rediscovered in a manuscript in Constantinople by Metropolitan Philotheos Bryennios and published in 1883.

What to look for

- The “Two Ways” (chapters I–VI): a way of life and a way of death, drawing heavily on the Sermon on the Mount.
- Some of the earliest instructions we have on baptism, fasting and the Lord’s Prayer (VII–VIII).
- Eucharistic thanksgiving prayers (IX–X) and how they compare with worship today.
- How the community tested travelling apostles and prophets, and appointed bishops and deacons (XI–XV).
- The closing call to watchfulness for the Lord’s coming (XVI).

Reading plan

Session 1	The Two Ways Chapters I–VI
Session 2	Worship and church order Chapters VII–XVI

Discussion questions

1. Why do you think a manual for new Christians begins with moral teaching rather than doctrine?
2. Which commands in the “Way of Life” feel most demanding today, and why?
3. What do chapters VII–X show about how the earliest Christians prayed and worshipped?
4. How were communities to tell a true prophet from a false one? Is that test still useful?
5. What does chapter XVI suggest about how these Christians lived while waiting for Christ?
6. What surprised you most about this glimpse of the early Church?

Tips for a group

Read each session’s pages before meeting. Bring one sentence that struck you and one question. Keep discussion to 45–60 minutes and end by sharing one thing to carry into the week.

Read it free

The full text is free to read online, with EPUB and plain-text downloads:
ancienttalks.com/books/didache.html