

FORERUNNERS OF THE FAITH

Lesson 3



WHY STUDY CHURCH HISTORY

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A is for Apologetics

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B is for Biography

WHY STUDY CHURCH HISTORY

A is for **Apologetics**

B is for **Biography**

C is for **Curiosity**

The Doctrinal Pillars

The Foundation: Christ

The Doctrinal Pillars

**Word of
God**

A Right
View of
Scripture

The Foundation: Christ

The Doctrinal Pillars

**Word of
God**

A Right
View of
Scripture

**Work of
God**

A Right
View of
Salvation

The Foundation: Christ

The Doctrinal Pillars

**Word of
God**

A Right
View of
Scripture

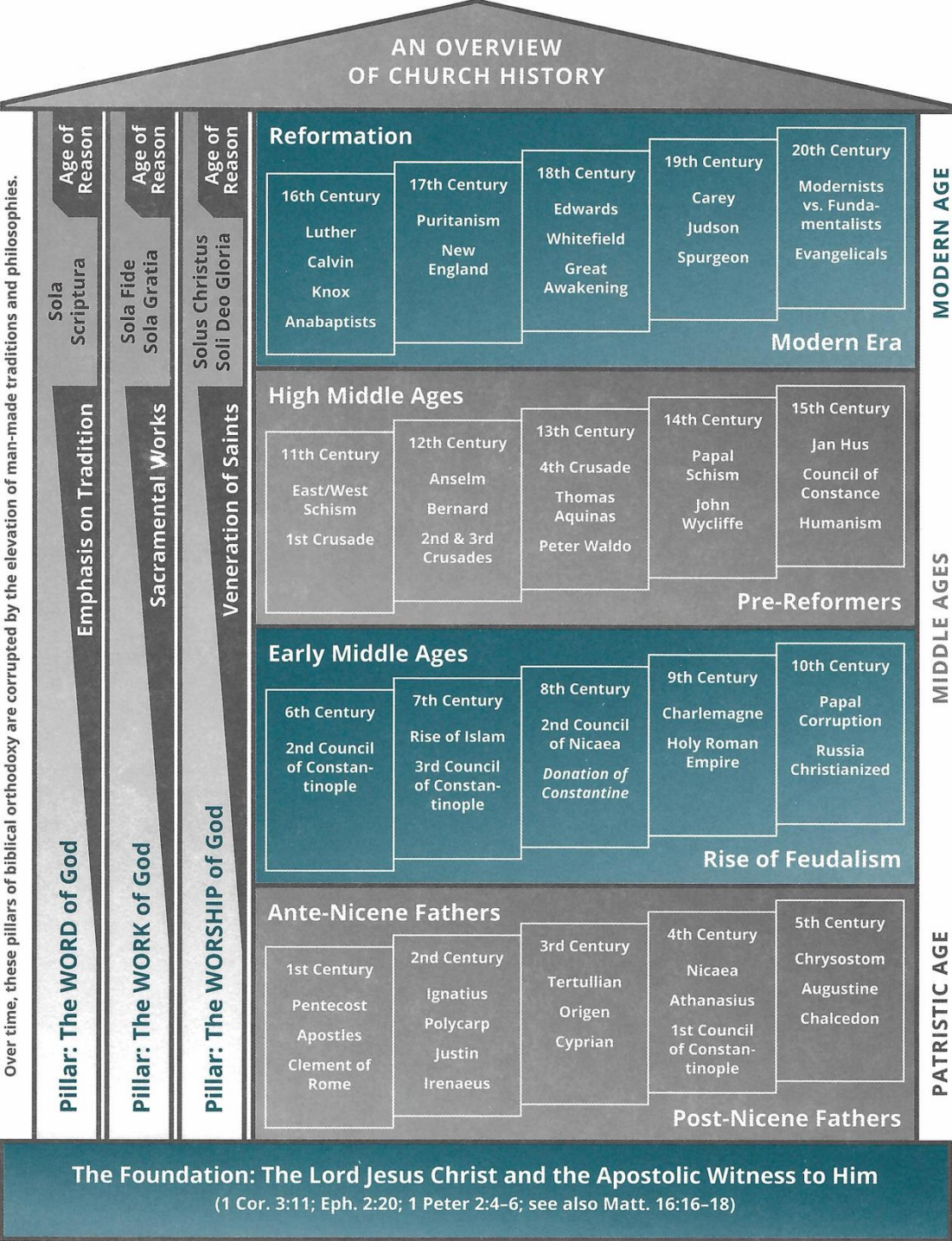
**Work of
God**

A Right
View of
Salvation

**Worship
of God**

A Right
View of
the Savior

The Foundation: Christ



Pillar: The WORD of God

Pillar: The WORK of God

Pillar: The WORSHIP of God

Early Middle Ages

6th Century

2nd Council
of Constantinople

7th Century

Rise of Islam
3rd Council
of Constantinople

8th Century

2nd Council
of Nicaea
*Donation of
Constantine*

9th Century

Charlemagne
Holy Roman
Empire

10th Century

Papal
Corruption
Russia
Christianized

Rise of Feudalism

Ante-Nicene Fathers

1st Century

Pentecost
Apostles
Clement of
Rome

2nd Century

Ignatius
Polycarp
Justin
Irenaeus

3rd Century

Tertullian
Origen
Cyprian

4th Century

Nicaea
Athanasius
1st Council
of Constantinople

5th Century

Chrysostom
Augustine
Chalcedon

Post-Nicene Fathers

PATRISTIC AGE

MIDDLE AGES

The Foundation: The Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostolic Witness to Him

THE DISCIPLES OF THE APOSTLES

INTRODUCTION

“The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

2 Timothy 2:2

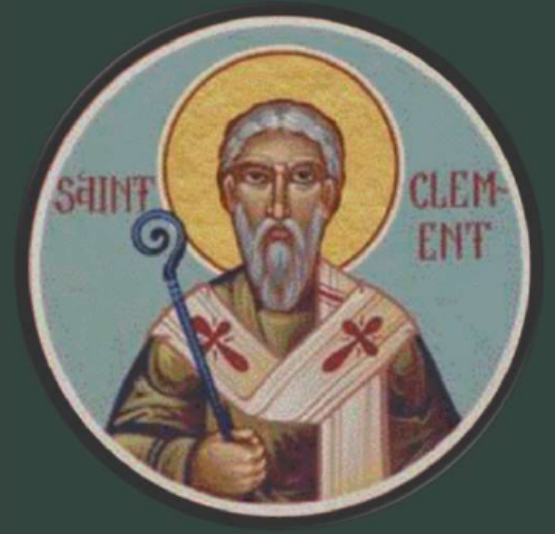
INTRODUCTION

- The “Apostolic Fathers” are so named because of their close proximity to the Apostles. They are the next generation. They include:
 - Clement of Rome
 - Ignatius of Antioch
 - Barnabas of Alexandria
 - Papias of Heirapolis
 - Polycarp of Smyrna
 - The authors of *The Didache*, *Shepherd of Hermas*, and *The Letter to Diognetus*.

CLEMENT OF ROME

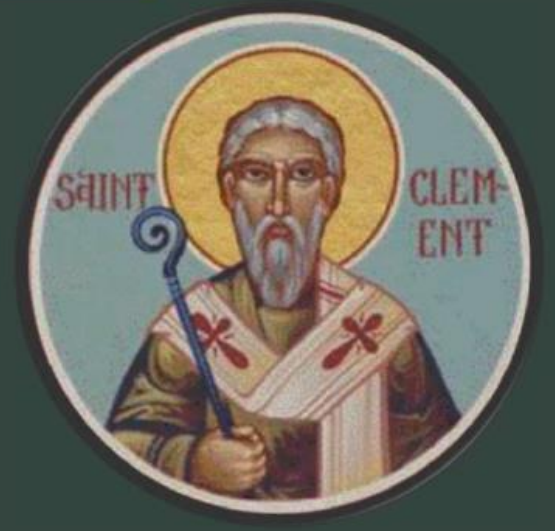
CLEMENT OF ROME

- Pastored the church in Rome (from around 90–100).
- Possibly mentioned in Philippians 4:3.
- Disciple of both Peter and Paul (from their time in Rome); martyred under Emperor Trajan around 100.



CLEMENT OF ROME

- Wrote a letter to the Corinthian church in the 90s.
- Addressed the issue of schism and divisiveness within the Corinthian congregation.



1 CLEMENT 32:4

And so we, having been called through His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified through ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety or works which we wrought in holiness of heart, but through faith, whereby the Almighty God justified all men that have been from the beginning; to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

1 CLEMENT 33:1

What then must we do, brethren? Must we idly abstain from doing good, and forsake love? May the Master never allow this to befall us at least; but let us hasten with urgency and zeal to accomplish every good work.



MARTYRDOM OF CLEMENT

IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH



- Pastored in Syrian Antioch
- Possibly installed by the instruction of Peter
- Disciple of John; friend of Polycarp
- Seven letters have survived
- Martyred in Rome around 117

IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH



Antioch was the launch point for Gentile missions, beginning in Acts 11.

TO THE MAGNESIANS

9. [Christians] regulate their calendar by the Lord's Day, the day, too, on which our Life rose by His power . . . , and if to this mystery we owe our faith and because of it submit to sufferings to prove ourselves disciples of Jesus Christ, our only Teacher: how, then, can we possibly live apart from Him?

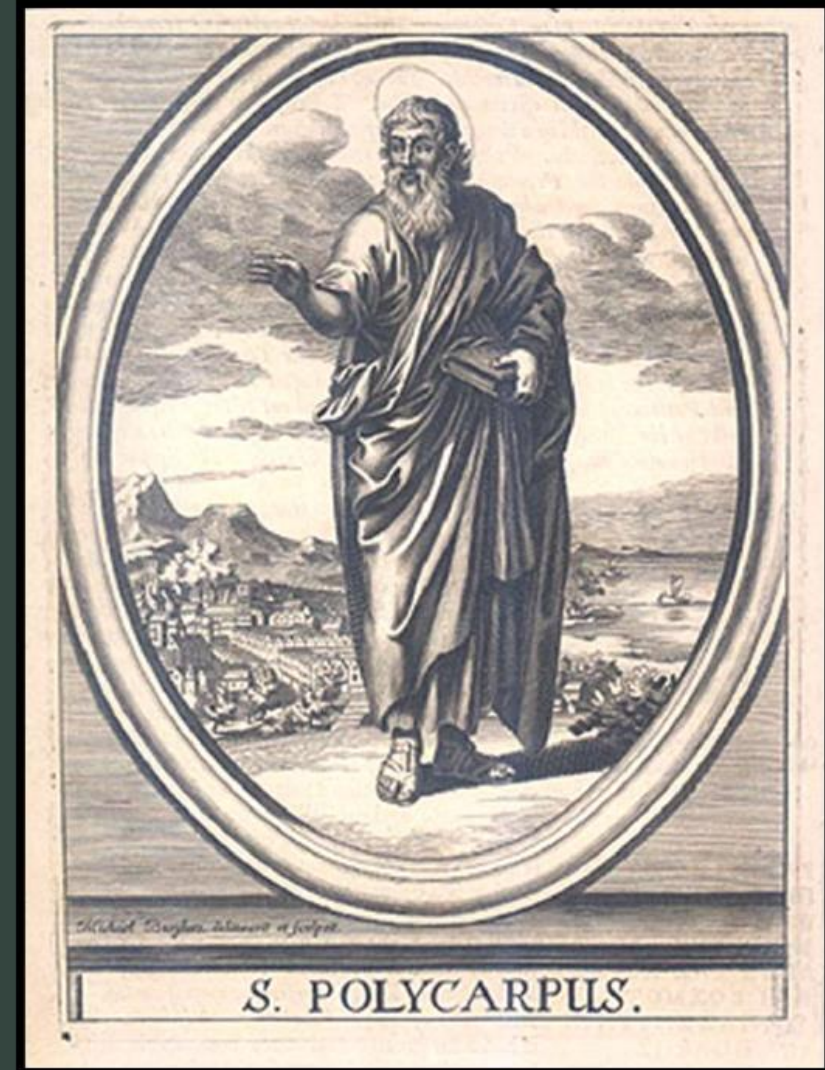
THE MARTYRDOM OF IGNATIUS



POLYCARP OF SMYRNA

POLYCARP OF SMYRNA

- Disciple of John
- One extant letter, *Epistle to the Philippians*
- Details about his death (in 155) are recounted in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* –one of the earliest accounts of Christian martyrdom.



POLYCARP OF SMYRNA



Smyrna is one of the seven churches
addressed in Revelation 2:8–13

TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Chapter 1: “I rejoiced . . . that the steadfast root of your faith which was known from ancient times abides until now and bears fruit unto our Lord Jesus Christ, who endured to face even death for our sins, whom God raised, having loosed the pangs of Hades; on whom, though you have not seen Him, you believe with joy unutterable and full of glory; unto which joy many desire to enter in; forasmuch as you know that it is by grace you are saved, not of works, but by the will of God through Jesus Christ.”

TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Chapter 2: “Therefore prepare for action and serve God in fear and truth, leaving behind empty and meaningless talk and the error of the crowd, and believing in the one who raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and gave Him glory and a throne at His right hand. To Him all things in heaven and on earth were subjected, whom every breathing creature serves, who is coming as judge of the living and the dead, for whose blood God will hold responsible those who disobey.”

TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Chapter 6: “So then, let us serve Him with fear and all reverence, just as He Himself has commanded, as did the apostles who preached the gospel to us, and the prophets who announced in advance the coming of our Lord..”

TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Chapter 8: ““Let us, therefore, hold steadfastly and unceasingly to our hope and the guarantee of our righteousness, who is Christ Jesus, who bore our sins in His own body upon the tree, who committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth; instead, for our sakes He endured all things, in order that we might live in Him. Let us, therefore, become imitators of His patient endurance, and if we should suffer for the sake of His name, let us glorify Him.”

TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Chapter 10: “Stand fast, therefore, in these things and follow the example of the Lord, firm and immovable in faith, loving the family of believers, cherishing one another, united in the truth, giving way to one another in the gentleness of the Lord, despising no one.”



The Martyrdom of Polycarp (by Jan Luiken in 1685)

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS



The influence of the Apostles' ministry can be seen in the geographical placement of the Apostolic Fathers.

THE DIDACHE

THE DIDACHE

- Written in the late-first or early-second century.
- A summary and application of apostolic teaching.
- Designed to be an early manual of Christian ethics, likely intended for baptismal candidates.

THE DIDACHE

Chapter 1

(1) There are two paths, one of life and one of death, and the difference is great between the two paths.

(2) Now the path of life is this -- first, you shall love the God who made you, your neighbor as yourself, and all things that you would not want done to you, do not do unto another. . . .

THE DIDACHE

Chapter 2

(1) But the second commandment of the teaching is this. (2) You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not corrupt youth; you shall not commit fornication; you shall not steal; you shall not use soothsaying; you shall not practice sorcery; you shall not kill a child by abortion, neither shall you slay it when born; you shall not covet the goods of your neighbor.

EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS

EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS

- Anonymous letter written to an unbeliever; likely in the mid-second century.
- Contains a beautiful description of our salvation in Christ—how sinners can receive both forgiveness and justification through Him.

TO DIOGNETUS

Chapter 9 (2) And when our iniquity had been fully accomplished, and it had been made perfectly manifest that punishment and death were expected as its recompense, and the season came which God had ordained, when henceforth He should manifest His goodness and power (O the exceeding great kindness and love of God), He hated us not, neither rejected us, →

TO DIOGNETUS

nor bore us malice, but was long-suffering and patient, and in pity for us took upon Himself our sins, and Himself parted with His own Son as a ransom for us, the holy for the lawless, the guileless for the evil, the just for the unjust, the incorruptible for the corruptible, the immortal for the mortal. (3) For what else but His righteousness would have covered our sins? →

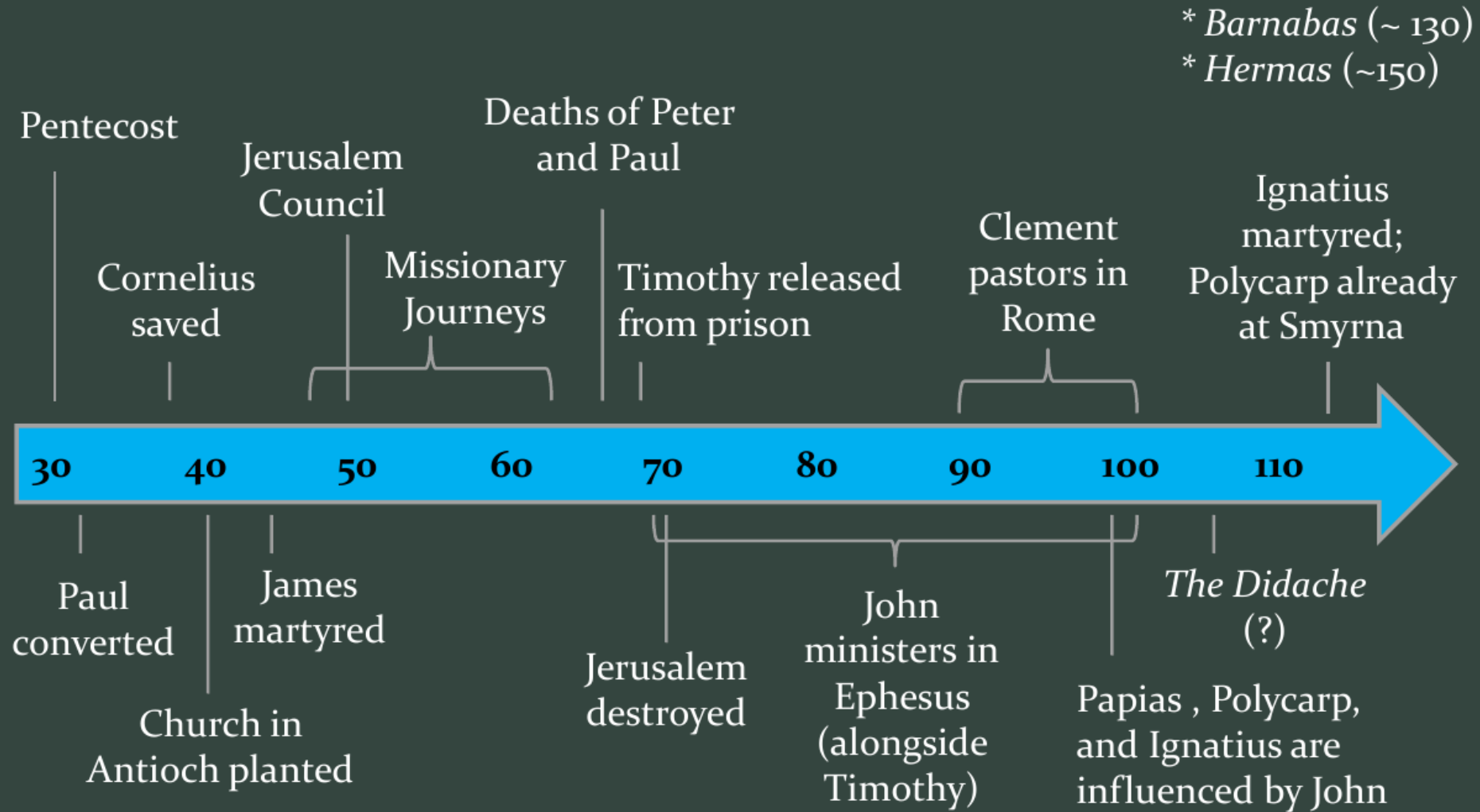
TO DIOGNETUS

(4) In whom was it possible for us lawless and ungodly men to have been justified, save only in the Son of God? (5) O the sweet exchange, O the inscrutable creation, O the unexpected benefits; that the iniquity of many should be concealed in One Righteous Man, and the righteousness of One should justify many that are iniquitous! →

TO DIOGNETUS

(6) Having then in the former time demonstrated the inability of our nature to obtain life, and having now revealed a Savior able to save even creatures which have no ability, He willed that for both reasons we should believe in His goodness and should regard Him as nurse, father, teacher, counsellor, physician, mind, light, honor, glory, strength and life.

TIMELINE



FINAL THOUGHTS

FINAL THOUGHTS

- The “Apostolic Fathers” include:
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 - Ignatius of Antioch
 - Barnabas of Alexandria
 - Papias of Heirapolis
 - Polycarp of Smyrna
 - The authors of *The Didache*, *Shepherd of Hermas*, and *The Letter to Diognetus*.

FINAL THOUGHTS

- After surveying the Apostolic Fathers, we find that most of them proved to be the “faithful men” of whom Paul spoke in 2 Timothy 2:2.
- Though neither inerrant nor authoritative, their writings demonstrate an earnest commitment both to preserve and to practice the teaching of the Apostles.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What convictions propelled Polycarp to be faithful to Christ (p. 31 in your workbook) even to the point of death? What practical steps can we take to develop those same convictions in our hearts and lives?
2. If you wrote a letter to an unbelieving friend or family member, how would you describe the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ?
3. What stood out to you about the Apostolic Fathers? What lessons did you learn that you can put into practice?

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