

# Honour Your Youthful Bishop

by Ignatius of Antioch

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*Honour your bishop, regardless of their age, and give reverence according to God's will.*

**Scripture:** Numbers 16:31, 1 Samuel 15:22-23, 2 Chronicles 26:16, 1 Timothy 4:12

**Topics:** "Respecting Authority", "Spiritual Leadership"

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## Description

Ignatius of Antioch emphasizes the importance of showing reverence and obedience to spiritual leaders, regardless of their age, highlighting examples from the lives of Daniel, Samuel, Jeremiah, Solomon, Josiah, and Timothy. He warns against despising youth when it is devoted to God and cautions against contradicting or mocking those in authority, as it ultimately disrespects God. Ignatius reminds the listeners of the severe consequences faced by those who rebelled against their superiors in the Bible.

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## Transcript

Now it becomes you also not to despise the age of your bishop, but to yield him all reverence, according to the will of God the Father, as I have known even holy presbyters do, not having regard to the manifest youth [of their bishop], but to his knowledge in God; inasmuch as "not the ancient are [necessarily] wise, nor do the aged understand prudence; but there is a spirit in men."

For Daniel the wise, at twelve years of age, became possessed of the divine Spirit, and convicted the elders, who in vain carried their grey hairs, of being false accusers, and of lusting after the beauty of another man's wife. Samuel also, when he was but a little child, reprov'd Eli, who was ninety years old, for giving honour to his sons rather than to God. In like manner, Jeremiah also received this message from God, "Say not, I am a child." Solomon too, and Josiah, [exemplified the same thing.] The former, being made king at twelve years of age, gave that terrible and difficult judgment in the case of the two women concerning their children. The latter, coming to the throne when eight years old cast down the altars and temples [of the idols], and burned down the groves, for they were dedicated to demons, and not to God. And he slew the false priests, as the corrupters and deceivers of men, and not the worshippers of the Deity. Wherefore youth is not to be despised when it is devoted to God. But he is to be despised who is of a wicked mind, although he be old, and full of wicked days.

Timothy the Christ-bearer was young, but hear what his teacher writes to him: "Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers in word and in conduct." It is becoming, therefore, that ye also should be obedient to your bishop, and contradict him in nothing; for it is a fearful thing to contradict any such person. For no one does [by such conduct] deceive him that is visible, but does [in reality] seek

to mock Him that is invisible, who, however, cannot be mocked by any one. And every such act has respect not to man, but to God. For God says to Samuel, "They have not mocked thee, but Me." And Moses declares, "For their murmuring is not against us, but against the Lord God." No one of those has, [in fact, ] remained unpunished, who rose up against their superiors. For Dathan and Abiram did not speak against the law, but against Moses, and were cast down alive into Hades. Korah also, and the two hundred and fifty who conspired with him against Aaron, were destroyed by fire. Absalom, again, who had slain his brother, became suspended on a tree, and had his evil-designing heart thrust through with darts. In like manner was Abeddadan beheaded for the same reason.

Uzziah, when he presumed to oppose the priests and the priesthood, was smitten with leprosy. Saul also was dishonoured, because he did not wait for Samuel the high priest. It behoves you, therefore, also to reverence your superiors.

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