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A Quarterly Newsletter of

HOMEMISSION

OUR TEAM YOUR HOME GOD'S MISSION



Welcome to the July Edition

As we step into July, we are reminded of God's continued faithfulness through every season. Summer often brings a different pace, yet it also offers fresh opportunities to encourage one another and remain steady in the work of caring for our church family.

In this quarter's edition of *Elders'Net*, you'll find updates, reflections, and helpful resources meant to strengthen and support you in your leadership. Our desire is that this newsletter continues to be both practical and encouraging, helping us stay connected as we serve with unity, wisdom, and purpose.

Thank you for the care, discernment, and dedication you bring to this calling. My prayer is that July will be a season marked by renewed encouragement, meaningful fellowship, and confidence in the Lord's direction as we continue forward together.

May the Lord continue to bless and sustain each of you in the days ahead.

— The Elders Net Team

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Be a Guest Contributor!

We can't do this alone. We are inviting guest contributors to submit articles for future editions. Do you have a story to tell, advice to share, or encouraging insights for our readership? If so, we would love to hear from you. Email your articles to

eldersnet@homemission.org.

Your Voice Matters!

Our goal is to keep the newsletter practical, relevant, and engaging – because it is all about serving your needs. So, this is your chance: submit questions, share concerns, suggest topics you would like to see addressed. Send your input to eldersnet@homemission.org.



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Christian Integrity

By Bob Dyer

In this article: Christian integrity is more than appearing moral on the outside. It is the steady alignment of belief, speech, and behavior under the lordship of Christ.

What Is Christian Integrity?

Integrity is the quality of being honest, consistent, and guided by strong moral principles—even when no one is watching. For a Christian, integrity means being the same person in private and in public, with a life shaped by truth and obedience to God.

- Truthfulness in speech and conduct
- Keeping your word even when it is difficult
- Financial honesty and fair dealing
- Purity in thought and behavior
- Treating others justly and respectfully

Key Thought #1: Christian integrity is living without masks or a double life—seeking to honor God in every part of daily life.

Why Integrity Matters

Integrity matters because it honors God and strengthens our witness to others. Scripture shows that a life of uprightness is both pleasing to the Lord and a blessing to the believer.

- It reflects God's holiness.
- It gives credibility to our witness.
- It brings security, wisdom, and guidance.
- It protects us from the damage of hidden sin.

Jesus: Our Perfect Example

Jesus is the perfect picture of integrity. He was fully obedient to the Father, truthful in word, consistent in character, and yet without sin. His life shows us what wholehearted faithfulness looks like.

Scripture references: Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22

Key Thought #2: Integrity is often most visible in ordinary moments—when no one is watching, when promises are costly, and when honesty requires courage.

Biblical Marks of Integrity

Scripture repeatedly describes integrity through the life of the upright and blameless person. These traits show up in both character and conduct.

- Speaking truth from the heart
- Refusing slander and gossip
- Keeping promises even when it costs
- Rejecting dishonesty and injustice
- Living with clean hands and a pure heart

Helpful passages: Psalm 15; Psalm 24; Colossians 3:17, 22–24; Galatians 5:22–23

Growing in Christian Integrity

We do not grow in integrity by willpower alone, but by walking closely with Jesus.

Growth begins in the heart and shows up in everyday choices.

- Practice regular repentance and invite God to search your heart.
- Fill your mind with Scripture so your conscience is shaped by truth.
- Welcome accountability from trusted believers.
- Be faithful in small acts of obedience—honesty, punctuality, kindness, and keeping promises.

Takeaways for Elders

- Integrity begins in the heart, not in appearances.
- It is proven in everyday faithfulness, honesty, and humility.
- It strengthens both personal discipleship and public witness.

Christian integrity is a quiet, steady witness. When our beliefs, words, and actions align with Christ, we reflect His truth in a world that is watching.

Seeing Through Their Eyes, Part 2

Understanding Perception in Shepherding

By Bob Turner

Editor's Note: In the April edition of Elder's Net, Bob Turner introduced the concept of perspective in the article "Seeing Through Their Eyes: Understanding Perspective in Shepherding." In this second article of the series, he expands on that foundation by examining perception—the process by which individuals interpret and assign meaning to what they see, hear, and experience. Understanding how perception influences thinking, feelings, and responses can help shepherds build stronger relationships, communicate more effectively, and minister with greater empathy and insight.

As we continue our discussion about perspective and perception, it is essential for elders to consider how one directly impacts the other. We must also understand the relationship between the two, especially as it relates to every person we shepherd. As a reminder, ***perspective is the lens through which we look. It is how we see an event, person, or circumstance. Perception is how we interpret what we see through that lens.***

Before responding to a person or situation, pause long enough to ask, "What lens am I looking through, and how is that lens shaping my interpretation?"

Our perspective is directly related to—and often dictates—our perception. Like perspective, perception is influenced by several key areas. However, unlike perspective, these influences are areas over which we generally do have a choice. Remember: perception is the way we interpret what we see through the lens of our perspective. Consider the following six areas:

- **Mood and attitude**
- **Expectations**
- **Religious preference**
- **Political position**
- **Acceptance of change**
- **Cognitive development**

Mood and Attitude. Each of us chooses the mood or attitude we bring into a moment. The idea that someone else can "make" us mad, happy, aggressive, or otherwise is an incorrect assumption. The mood or attitude we choose will influence our perception. Regardless of perspective, a person who

chooses anger will interpret an event, person, or circumstance differently than someone with the same perspective who chooses patience, positivity, or calm. Mood and attitude are critical when it comes to perception.

Expectations. Expectations are another key influence on perception. This category is unique because the expectations we place on ourselves influence perception, and the expectations we place on others also shape how we interpret what we see. For example, when we expect others to know certain information or act according to a certain standard, our perception can become skewed, and our interpretation of the person or situation may be incorrect. Each of us has standards we believe are right. When others do not live up to those same expectations, we may assume they are wrong. As elders, we must remember that not everyone thinks the way we do. Because of that, people and situations may be perceived differently.

Religious Preference. Not every person is religious. Those who choose a specific religious preference are influenced by the teachings associated with that religious group, and this can have a significant impact on perception. The way one interprets a person, event, or situation will be viewed through that preference. The same person, event, or situation may be interpreted differently by someone who holds no religious preference. The freedom of religion is a tremendous right in this country. In nations where this choice or freedom is taken away, perspectives change, and perception is directly affected. The way people interpret the dynamics of each encounter will be different.

Political Position. Much like religious preference, a person's political position can influence perception. People often interpret events, people, and circumstances through their political position. Someone who holds a very conservative position may perceive a situation differently from someone with a more liberal position. This is not to say one is right and the other is wrong, but to emphasize that perception is influenced by personal choices surrounding politics, political position, or party. Sadly, our history has brought us to a point where we often see angst between these choices. Why is it that when someone chooses a different political position, they can quickly be viewed as an "enemy" of the opposing side? It can feel as though there is an expectation for Republicans and Democrats to be mortal enemies, automatically opposing one another regardless of personal beliefs or convictions.

Acceptance of Change. Not everyone likes change. Not all change is good, but not all change is bad either. Whether someone accepts change or resists it, their perception will differ as it relates to the events, people, or circumstances they see. Acceptance of change is a choice, and that choice provides a different way of interpreting what is seen than the interpretation of someone who is resistant to change. This mindset is often influenced by the previous factors we have discussed: mood and attitude, expectations, religious preference, and political position. It is also influenced by the final component in our discussion: cognitive development.

Cognitive Development. Ongoing learning, or cognitive development, also influences perception. The choice to be a learner is significant in the way we interpret the world around us. A fixed mindset—one that refuses to grow and learn—will interpret surroundings differently from a growth mindset that views every event, person, and circumstance as an opportunity to learn and grow. Choosing to develop our thinking opens the mind to see things differently through perspective and to interpret them more wisely through perception. The result is an open door to future growth and leadership effectiveness that is far greater than a stagnant mindset allows.

We have covered a lot of information in this discussion about perspective and perception. As mentioned before, these lists are not exhaustive, but they represent factors that tend to limit the way we see things and influence the way we interpret what we see through the lens of our perspective. I also want to acknowledge that there is some overlap in the categories listed. For example, as an adult I chose to return to school to pursue further graduate degrees. That continuing educational path had a major impact on my perspective. Unlike my education as a child, when I had no choice, as an adult I did have a choice. That choice shaped my perspective and also influenced my perception. We will find similarities in other areas, but when we understand perspective and perception in this way, it will help us in life, leadership, and shepherding.

Key Points for Elders:

- Perception is shaped by the lens of perspective, but it is also influenced by choices we make.
- Mood, attitude, expectations, and openness to change can either clarify or distort what we see.
- Religious and political convictions can influence interpretation, but they should not prevent us from listening carefully and shepherding wisely.
- A growth mindset helps elders remain teachable, patient, and better equipped to serve others.

Takeaway: Elders who understand the connection between perspective and perception are better prepared to slow down, listen well, interpret wisely, and shepherd with grace.

Rescuing the “Nancy Guthrie” in YOUR Life

By Cory Collins

The disappearance and apparent abduction of Nancy Guthrie have drawn national attention, partly because she is the mother of Savannah Guthrie of NBC’s *Today* show. Though many people go missing each year, this case reminds us how urgently one precious person can be sought.

The Value of One Soul

When one person is missing, those who love them will spend time, energy, and resources searching. That kind of concern should remind us of the value of a single soul.

Jesus implied that one soul is worth more than all the world. Note His words:

“For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?” — Mark 8:36–37

Who Is Missing from Your Church Family?

So, who is the “Nancy Guthrie” that *you* know—the brother or sister who once worshiped, prayed, served, and shared fellowship with you, but is now absent?

“Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor... Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality... Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another.” — Romans 12:10, 13, 15–16

Now that person is gone from sight. Did they move? Were they hurt? Did discouragement, neglect, conflict, or sin pull them away? Someone needs to care enough to look.

Warning Signs We May Miss

Often there were warning signs: they pulled back from ministry, attended less often, sat alone, arrived late, or left quickly. Perhaps they were discouraged, frustrated, neglected, or simply unnoticed.

What is it worth to try to find and restore that soul?

Flawed Assumptions and Approaches

- “They will come back if they want to.”
- “They never reached out to me either.”
- “I do not know what to say, and I do not want to get involved.”
- “That is the elders’ or ministers’ job.”

Clear Biblical Instructions

Matthew 18:12–14: If one sheep goes astray, the shepherd leaves the ninety-nine and searches for the one. When he finds it, he rejoices. “So, it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

Galatians 6:1–2: If anyone is caught in transgression, the spiritual should restore that person in a spirit of gentleness. “Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

2 Timothy 2:23–24: Avoid foolish controversies. The Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, and patient.

James 5:19–20: Whoever brings back a sinner from wandering “will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

Effective Steps and Strategies

- **Pray specifically.** Ask God to help you understand what has happened and value this soul as He does.
- **Find them.** Their name may be in your church directory, but their heart may be far away.
- **Seek restoration, not merely attendance.** Minister to their pain, questions, and concerns.
- **Do no harm.** Avoid arrogance, assumptions, and judgmental words.

Making Contact

- **Make gentle contact.** Send a card, text, or call simply to express love and concern.

- **Offer to meet.** Coffee or lunch can open the door to honest conversation.
- **Listen first.** Ask open-ended questions and resist the urge to defend or correct too quickly.
- **Build trust.** Honor confidence unless safety or legal responsibilities require otherwise.

Listening Well

- Let them express disappointment, frustration, grief, or even anger without interruption.
- Respond with humility: “Please tell me more,” or “Help me understand.”
- Paraphrase what you hear so they know you are listening carefully.

- Show compassion: “I am sorry you had that experience.”

Encouraging Restoration

- If sin or negligence is involved, gently encourage honest self-examination in light of God’s Word.
- Pray with them when appropriate.
- Follow up. Restoration often takes more than one visit.

Conclusion: Who Will Go?

There is a “Nancy Guthrie” in your life—someone you know, love, and miss. Who will go searching? Who will do what they can to help bring that soul home?



Questions from the Readers

Question: We, the other elders and I, have not practiced church discipline for so long that many sin issues in families of our congregation have simply been ignored. We recently attended a conference and came away convicted that we have been wrong. How would you recommend we address this issue without causing major divisions in the congregation?

Answer: First, before any other action, the elders should review the Lord’s teaching in Matthew 18:15-35. Secondly, the New Testament instructs us to practice withdrawal from those who refuse to repent (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Any congregation that chooses to ignore this command when it is applicable is disobeying God. If we have failed to withdraw from the unrepentant in the past, we must begin to do so.

I would encourage the elders to request detailed preaching on this subject. After the subject has been thoroughly covered, the elders should consider going before the congregation, confessing this sin to the congregation and vowing to be faithful to this teaching in the future.

I would also suggest that you consider going back over the past three to five years and visiting the homes of those who are no longer faithful or who are continuing in unrepentant sin. Beg them to repent and return to the fold. The names of those who refuse to do so could then be read on a single Sunday before the congregation, along with the announcement that you are withdrawing fellowship from these individuals. Acknowledge that the elders have let these individuals down in the past by not addressing this sooner and encourage the entire congregation to pray fervently for their repentance.

Hopefully, if done openly and transparently, an approach like this will help prevent the matter from becoming a divisive issue in your congregation.

Question: Recently, a group of young couples approached the elders with various desires for changes in our worship, Bible classes, and activities. Many of these ideas seem to skirt the edge of being controversial or outright unscriptural. After meeting with us, they held subsequent meetings and have now presented the elders with a list of demands. If these changes are not made, they threaten to leave the congregation. What should we do?

Answer: First, I would recommend that the elders meet and review the list of demands. Classify them into three groups: unscriptural, controversial but not unscriptural, and neither controversial nor unscriptural. As an eldership, be prepared to use the Bible to defend your position on all unscriptural items. Discuss and agree on your thoughts regarding controversial items. Perform a sincere analysis of those items: Are they simply not in keeping with your traditions? Are they merely not the preference of the eldership? Be prepared to defend your conclusions. Give serious consideration to agreeing with the items that are neither unscriptural nor controversial as an effort to keep unity and offer an “olive branch.”

Second, I would ask your minister to preach sermons addressing the unscriptural items on the list. Or the elders should provide teaching in the adult Bible classes on each of the unscriptural items. The answers should be biblical, well thought out authoritative teaching on these items. Present it as this is what the Bible teaches, what God demands and expects, not what men want.

Third, (this could happen at the same time as the second recommendation is occurring) I would recommend that the elders meet with each couple individually, not collectively. Keep in mind that a “group” mentality can sometimes develop, and it is possible that not all of these couples feel the same way or feel as strongly as others. Listen to each couple, ask clarifying questions, and seek a better understanding of why they feel this way. Remind each couple of the role of the eldership to feed and protect

the flock (1 Peter 5:1–4). When unscriptural issues are raised, gently explain, using the Holy Scriptures, where you stand on those issues. Remind them that God hates division and seeks unity in the church. During these visits, attempt to determine who the leaders of this group are.

Fourth, when all these visits have been completed, organize a meeting with the group leaders. Have a very frank and firm conversation with them. Review the list of issues and calmly, firmly present your positions. Request that all unscriptural efforts stop immediately. These issues are wrong, and their attitudes regarding these unscriptural matters are causing division within the congregation. Remind them of Romans 16:17–18. Strongly encourage them to repent publicly for their divisive influence. If they repent, praise God. If they refuse to repent, you will have to ask them to leave the congregation or withdraw fellowship from them.

I understand that what I am suggesting may not be pleasant. But times like these are why our congregations have elders. One of the major roles of elders is to protect the flock from ideas, philosophies, and divisions that originate from men and not from God. Failure to act decisively could lead to the long-term downfall or collapse of this congregation.

The answers shared here are those of the editor, offered in a spirit of discussion, encouragement, and Christian fellowship. I have sought to provide biblically and scripturally grounded responses to the questions presented. These reflections do not necessarily represent the views of the Elders Net Contributors, the HomeMission’s staff or HomeMission evangelists. If you disagree with any of the answers, I welcome respectful discussion and the opportunity to learn from those who may have greater wisdom, knowledge or insight. Direct your questions or comments to me at eldersnet@homemission.org.

Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.
Galatians 6:9 (ESV)

The Noble Bereans:

An Elder's Responsibility to Guard the Teaching

By David Fittz

Key Text: ***"They received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11, NKJV).***

The Noble Example of Berea

When Paul and Silas arrived in Berea, Luke records a short statement that has echoed through generations of Bible students: ***"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11, NKJV).*** The Bereans were noble because they were both eager to hear and careful to verify. That balance is especially important for elders today.

Elders are not called merely to organize services or manage schedules. We are shepherds of souls, and part of that shepherding includes guarding what is taught in sermons, Bible classes, devotionals, and every setting where the congregation is being instructed. If teaching shapes faith, then elders must be sure that teaching is rooted in Scripture rather than personality, preference, tradition, or opinion.

Why This Matters for Elders

Paul gave Timothy this charge: ***"Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them" (1 Timothy 4:16, NKJV).*** The wording reminds us that sound teaching is not a small matter. What is taught affects both the teacher and the hearers. Elders, therefore, should encourage every preacher and teacher to handle the Word with reverence, clarity, and accuracy.

Titus 1:9 says that an elder must be one who is ***"holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict" (NKJV).*** This verse gives elders two responsibilities. First, we must hold firmly to the trustworthy Word

ourselves. Second, we must use that Word to encourage what is right and correct what is wrong. Both duties require regular study and humble discernment.

Holding Fast to the Faithful Word

The Berean pattern is not suspicion; it is submission. They did not search the Scriptures because they wanted to catch Paul in an error. They searched because God's Word was the final authority. In the same spirit, elders should foster a congregation where open Bibles are welcomed, questions are treated respectfully, and every lesson is measured by the truth of Scripture.

The Berean spirit is not a spirit of suspicion, but a spirit of submission to the final authority of God's Word.

Questions Elders Can Ask

Paul also wrote, ***"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15, NKJV).***

That standard belongs not only to the person standing before the class or congregation, but also to those who oversee the spiritual feeding of the flock.

- Is this lesson faithful to the text?
- Is the context respected?
- Are conclusions drawn from Scripture rather than forced upon it?
- Is the message helping the church grow in Christ?

Practical Ways to Encourage Sound Teaching

This responsibility should be carried out with gentleness and humility. Teachers need

encouragement, not needless criticism. Congregations need confidence, not confusion. Elders can help by meeting with teachers, reviewing themes and materials, recommending Scripture-centered resources, and lovingly addressing concerns when a lesson drifts from the Word.

- Meet with teachers periodically to encourage them and understand their lesson plans.
- Review class themes, study materials, and sermon series with a Scripture-centered focus.
- Recommend resources that help teachers handle the Word carefully.
- Address concerns lovingly and privately when a lesson drifts from the Word.

Shepherding Through the Word

Peter reminds elders to ***“shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers” (1 Peter 5:2, NKJV)***. Shepherding includes feeding, guiding,

protecting, and watching. When elders make sure the congregation is being taught from Scripture, they are not interfering with the work of teachers; they are fulfilling the work of shepherds.

May we be noble like the Bereans: eager to receive the Word, careful to examine the Scriptures, and faithful to lead others by what God has actually said. A church that learns to ask, “What do the Scriptures say?” is a church being led toward spiritual maturity, unity, and truth.

Closing Prayer

Father, help us receive Your Word with readiness and examine all things by the Scriptures. Give elders wisdom, courage, humility, and love as they shepherd the flock and guard the teaching. May our congregation always ask, “What do the Scriptures say?” and may our faith rest firmly on Your truth. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



WHAT IF CHRISTIANS LIVED DIFFERENTLY?

The ENGAGE Conference is designed to strengthen families, equip young people, and help Christians think biblically in a world that is constantly changing. Join us September 11-13 as we study what it means to turn the world upside down by living faithfully for Christ. Speakers, schedules and times can be found at cocbrownstreet.org/engage

You are invited to join us September 10th for a special Engage session specifically for Elders, Deacons, Ministers and their wives only.

Elders' Net is a publication under the oversight of HomeMission and the eldership of the West Freeway church of Christ, White Settlement, Texas. The format of Elders' Net is a newsletter publication allowing elders to share their experiences as elders helping / assisting other elders/elderships that may be encountering difficulties and may be benefited through sharing of successes or failures that address their difficulty. The sharing of these experiences may help all those involved to both grow and mature.

Please join our mailing list as an elder or eldership and we will send a copy of Elders' Net with your copy of the *HomeMission* newsletter!

Please join us in praying for our fellow elders all over the world in addition to those who subscribe to Elders' Net. Whether serving now or in the past, God continues to use each of us in His service!

May God Bless our efforts to serve Him as shepherds and may we grow closer and wiser by sharing the wisdom of many elders.

Please send your opinions and questions to us at:
eldersnet@homemission.org

Thank you for Reading!



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