

Guarding Sound Doctrine through Elder Approval

Approved by BEFC Elders: December 9, 2024

Biblical Foundations

1. *False doctrine (i.e. teaching and practice contrary to the Bible) is prevalent.*

- False doctrine blows like hurricane winds through society (Ephesians 4:14).
- Fierce wolves *will* “come in among you,” even the elders (Acts 20:29).
- The Spirit expressly warns that false teaching *will* lead people astray (1 Timothy 4:1).

2. *False doctrine threatens people’s eternal destiny.*

- False teaching threatens the salvation of its teachers and its hearers (1 Timothy 4:16).
- A different or distorted gospel is a cursed gospel, a non-saving gospel (Galatians 1:6–7; 5:4).

3. *No one has a “right” to the teaching ministry of the church.*

- No one is sufficient to herald Christ from the Scriptures (2 Corinthians 2:16). However, God makes his servants sufficient (2 Corinthians 3:5–6). Therefore, any and all teaching in the church is by God’s *mercy* (2 Corinthians 4:1), through *his* power (2 Corinthians 4:2–6), and for *his* glory (2 Corinthians 4:7).
- No one appoints himself to this ministry (Hebrews 5:4).
- No one sends himself to preach or teach (Romans 10:15).

4. *The elders of the church are responsible to guard the doctrine of the church.*

- Their only skill (as opposed to character) qualification is “apt to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2).
- They must “keep a close watch” on the teaching (1 Timothy 4:16).
- They must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so that they may give instruction in sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict it (Titus 1:9).
- They will give an account to God for how they guard the doctrine of the church (Hebrews 13:17; James 3:1).

Practical Application: Guarding Doctrine by Approving Teachers and Teaching

In light of the above biblical truths, the elders desire to take seriously their responsibility to guard the doctrine of BEFC in part by approving who is doing the teaching and what is being taught in our various formal teaching ministries.

Five Guiding Principles

Toward that end, here are five principles that will guide what and how the elders desire to approve teachers and teaching at BEFC:

- *Principle 1: The more officially connected to BEFC a given ministry context is, the more responsible the elders are to guard its doctrine.*
- *Principle 2: The more formal a ministry context is, the more responsible the elders are to guard its doctrine.*
- *Principle 3: The larger or more broadly-aimed the group is, the more responsible the elders are to guard its doctrine.*
- *Principle 4: The lesser known, longer, more in-depth, or more controversial the material is, the more time the elders will need to review it for approval.*
- *Principle 5: The elders seek to approve teachers who have the spiritual maturity and doctrinal depth requisite for the specific teaching context.*

A Policy

Teachers: The elders will consider and approve potential teachers as they express interest or as other ministry leaders identify them to the elders. This will apply to potential teachers such as:

- Women's Bible study teachers and leaders
- Men's training table leaders
- Elevate teachers and leaders
- Sunday School
- Children's ministry teachers and leaders (both Sunday and Wednesday)

Teaching: The elders desire to review and approve teaching material according to the following guideline:

- Generally, the timing should be governed by a common-sense application of *Principle 4* above.
- Specifically, it would be helpful to give an elder any teaching materials at least a month before the intended teaching.