

“Not a New Convert”, 1 Timothy 3:6
Pastor Shawn Newberry, March 15, 2026

1 Timothy 3:6 — Tested Faith Before Leadership

“He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.”

Big Idea

Spiritual leadership requires **tested faith over time**, not rapid promotion.

I. Spiritual Maturity Requires Time

1 Timothy 3:6 — “He must not be a recent convert.”

Things that **start fast often end fast**.

A Long Obedience in the Same Direction reminds us that discipleship is:

- **Slow**
- **Patient**
- **Sustained**

Paul’s Example

- **Galatians 1:16–18** — Paul spent **three years reflecting** after conversion.
- **Acts 11:25–26** — Paul spent **1–2 years being discipled by Barnabas in Antioch**.

Nearly **five years passed** before Paul was sent out as a missionary.

Principle: God forms leaders **slowly before using them publicly**.

II. Spiritual Maturity Requires Testing

Faith must be **proven through hardship**.

2 Corinthians 11:23–28

Paul endured imprisonments, beatings, shipwrecks, hunger, and constant pressure.

Philippians 4:12–13

“I have learned the secret...”

The word **secret** means **a deeply learned mastery**.

Paul learned to trust Christ:

- **in abundance**
- **in suffering**

God refines believers through trials:

- **James 1:2–4** — Trials produce steadfastness.
- **1 Peter 1:7** — Faith tested like gold in fire.

This process is **sanctification**.

Lesson: You do not want elders whose faith has **never been tested**.

III. Spiritual Maturity Requires Humility

1 Timothy 3:6

“...or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.”

The devil fell because of **pride**.

Immature leaders often seek:

- recognition
- influence
- praise

But mature leaders are shaped by **humility through suffering**.

The Example of Jesus

- **Hebrews 5:7–9** — Jesus learned obedience through suffering.
- **Luke 2:52** — Jesus grew in wisdom and stature.

If Jesus prepared for **30 years**, the church should not rush leadership.

Application

Choose elders who have:

- walked with God through hardship
- learned to trust Christ in every season
- demonstrated humility over time

In **1 Timothy 3:6**, Paul teaches that spiritual leadership requires maturity that is formed over time, not quickly gained influence. The Christian life is what *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* describes as a slow and steady walk with God where perseverance matters more than speed. Even the apostle Paul spent years reflecting, learning, and being disciplined before stepping into public ministry, and his faith was later refined through suffering, hardship, and trials that taught him the “secret” of trusting Christ in every circumstance (Phil. 4:12–13). God uses these seasons of testing to shape believers through sanctification, refining their faith like gold in fire. Because pride is the very sin that led to the fall of the devil, the church must not elevate immature believers into leadership too quickly. Instead, elders should be men who have walked with God through both joy and suffering, who have learned humility and dependence on Christ, and whose lives demonstrate a long pattern of faithful obedience.

Discussion Questions:

1. **Where has God used hardship or disappointment in your life to deepen your faith or reshape your understanding of Him?**

Looking back, what did you learn about trusting God during that season?

2. **Paul said he learned the “secret” of trusting Christ in every circumstance (Phil. 4:12–13).**

In what situations do you find it hardest to trust God—times of suffering, uncertainty, success, or comfort? Why?

3. **1 Timothy 3:6 warns about the danger of pride in spiritual leadership.**

What are some ways pride can quietly grow in a believer’s heart, and what practices help cultivate humility before God?

4. **When life becomes painful or confusing, where do you tend to turn first—toward God, away from Him, or toward something else for comfort?**

What does that reveal about what you are trusting most in that moment?