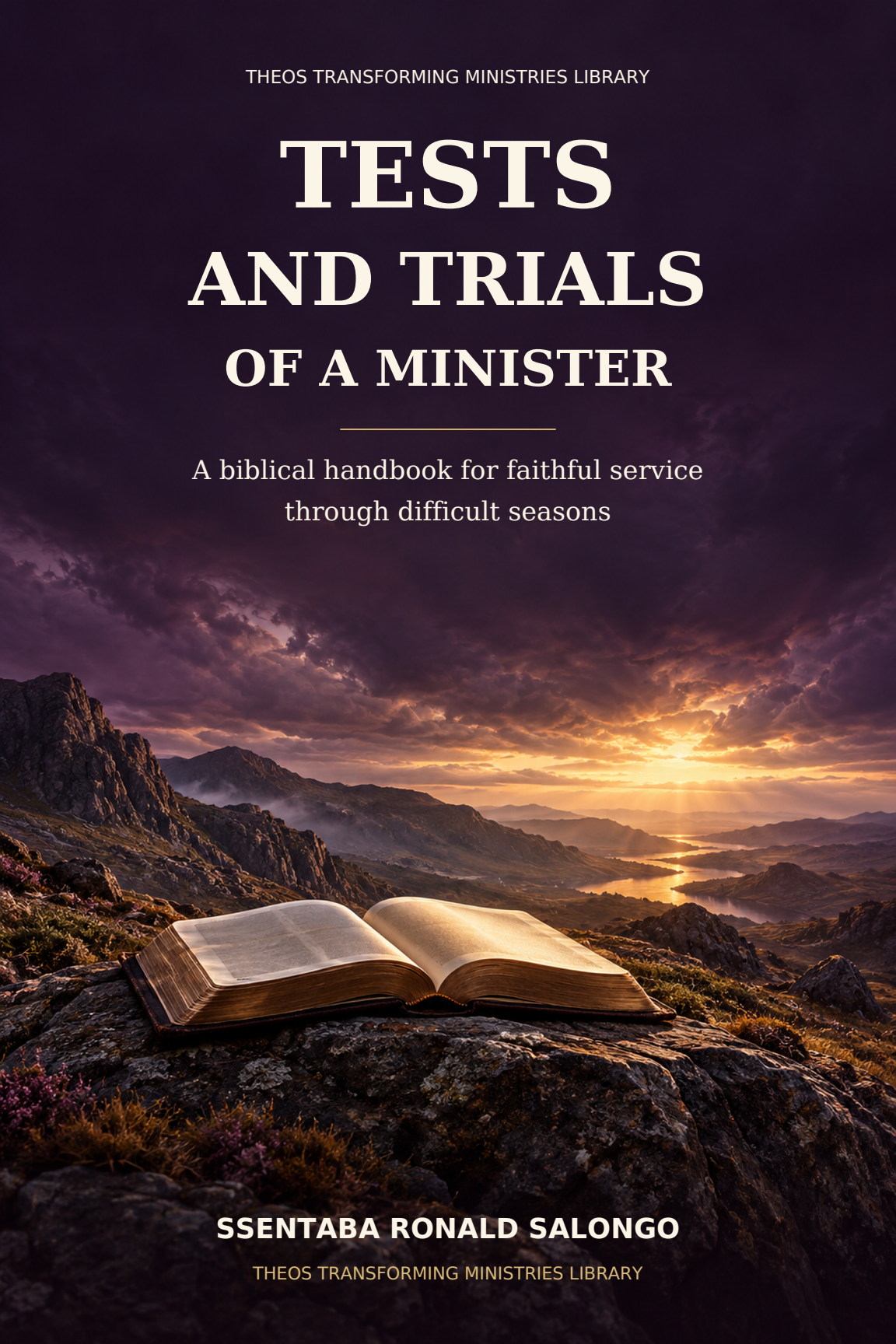
THEOS TRANSFORMING MINISTRIES LIBRARY

TESTS AND TRIALS OF A MINISTER

A biblical handbook for faithful service through difficult seasons



SSENTABA RONALD SALONGO

THEOS TRANSFORMING MINISTRIES LIBRARY



Tests and Trials of a Minister

A biblical handbook for faithful service through difficult seasons

Ssentaba Ronald Salongo

Theos Transforming Ministries Library

Copyright

Copyright © 2026 Theos Transforming Ministries. All rights reserved.

Written by Ssentaba Ronald Salongo. Published by Theos Transforming Ministries Library.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means without the publisher's written permission, except brief quotations in reviews and other uses permitted by applicable law.

Scripture passages are discussed and paraphrased throughout. These explanations are the author's teaching, not quotations from a single Bible translation. Readers are encouraged to study the complete passages in their own Bibles.

First edition 2026.

Acknowledgements

We thank God for the grace that sustains His servants and for the many teachers, congregations, families and fellow workers through whom we learn to serve faithfully. We acknowledge Pastor Gerald Mukuye for teaching on tests and trials in ministry and for the contribution of those lessons to the beginnings of this study. This handbook is written by Ssentaba Ronald Salongo and belongs to the publishing work of Theos Transforming Ministries.

To every minister who has continued to love people while carrying a private burden, we offer these pages in fellowship. May the Lord strengthen us to receive correction, encourage one another and remain faithful to Jesus Christ.

Contents

Introduction 6

1 Understanding Tests Trials and Temptations 16

2 The Seventeen Areas of Testing 25

3 The Test of Timing 31

4 Ziklag and the Pressure on the Home 37

5 Remaining Steadfast When Private Life Is Difficult 42

6 The Economic Test of Need and Provision 47

7 Stewardship Mercy and the Test of Abundance 52

8 The Test of Rejection 57

9 Faith That Endures Examination 62

10 The Test of Vision 67

11 When Support Diminishes 72

12 The Word That Examines the Minister 77

13 Applying the Word Without Distorting It 82

Contents continued

14 The Test of Misunderstanding 87

15 Discouragement and the Stories We Believe 92

16 Recognising the Sources of Discouragement 96

17 Courage and the Recovery of Hope 102

18 Frustration and Blocked Expectations 107

19 Entering a Wilderness Season 112

20 Listening Learning and Humility in the Wilderness 117

21 Patience Proven Character and Hope 122

22 Servanthood Without Exploitation 127

23 Standing Faithfully in Spiritual Warfare 132

24 Promotion Recognition and Greater Responsibility 137

25 Sorek and the Guarding of the Heart 142

26 Self Control Repentance and Perseverance 147

Questions ministers ask 153

Continuing the journey of faithful service 160

Sources and further reading 161

About the author and ministry contacts 163

Introduction

When the preacher also needs encouragement

A minister may preach about hope on Sunday and struggle to find hope on Monday. We can pray for another family while wondering how our own household will survive. We can teach about patience and then discover how impatient we become when our work is overlooked. Sometimes we stand before people with a prepared message while carrying a question we have not been able to answer: why am I passing through this situation when I am trying to serve the Lord?

This book is written for that minister. It is for the pastor whose congregation is small, the evangelist facing repeated rejection, the teacher whose words have been misunderstood, and the leader entrusted with responsibilities for which public recognition has not prepared the heart. It is also for those preparing for ministry. Before we ask how far a gift can take us, we need to ask what kind of people we are becoming as we use it.

We do not write as spectators looking down on struggling servants. We write as fellow workers who need the same grace. Proverbs 27:17 presents the picture of iron sharpening iron. Such sharpening requires honest contact. Encouragement sometimes reassures us that we are not alone; sometimes it

exposes a habit that threatens our service. A useful ministry handbook must do both. It must comfort the weary without excusing wrongdoing and challenge the careless without crushing the wounded.

Many ministers have been taught how to begin a work but have received little preparation for what happens when the work becomes difficult. They know how to announce a vision but not how to respond when trusted people leave. They know the language of faith but feel ashamed when questions arise. They may mistake every obstacle for evidence that they have missed God, or assume that every conflict proves they are being persecuted for righteousness. Neither conclusion is safe without careful examination.

Our purpose is to help us recognise what a difficult season is revealing, bring that discovery before God, and respond with faithful action. A season that we cannot explain completely can still become a season in which we learn to obey more honestly. We may not know why a door closed, but we can refuse dishonesty. We may not understand a betrayal, but we can seek justice without surrendering to revenge. We may not know when circumstances will change, but we can learn what love requires today.

Why preparation matters

In 1 Timothy 3:10, Paul instructs Timothy that prospective deacons should first have their character examined before being entrusted with service. The

immediate subject is the appointment of deacons. The verse should not be detached from that setting and turned into a rule that every Christian must complete an identical series of hardships before doing any useful service. Nevertheless, the wider chapter makes the principle unmistakable: those entrusted with responsibility in the church must have observable character. An impressive claim to calling does not remove the need for examination.

The qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 concern such matters as self-control, faithfulness, hospitality, conduct at home, freedom from greed, and a good reputation. These qualities become visible over time. A person can describe humility in an interview and still react angrily when corrected. Someone can speak persuasively about stewardship and still handle another person's money carelessly. Daily life reveals whether our teaching has begun to govern us.

The classroom offers a helpful comparison. We expect a learner to demonstrate understanding before receiving greater responsibility. A minister likewise needs more than a desire for advancement. Yet the comparison has limits. God is our Father, not an examiner selling access to His love. Salvation is His gift through Christ, and suffering does not purchase it. Nor does every painful event represent a failed examination that God has arranged to repeat until we earn a higher title.

The serious point is that an unaddressed weakness can follow us into a larger assignment. If we refuse financial accountability in a small fellowship, a bigger congregation will give the same weakness greater opportunity to harm people. If we cannot hear correction as assistants, becoming senior leaders will not automatically make us teachable. Preparation protects the people we hope to serve. Greater responsibility should be entrusted where there is growing evidence of faithfulness, rather than merely hunger for a platform.

None of our titles exempts us from this work. Apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher and bishop are not protections against pride, fear, greed or sexual misconduct. Ephesians 4:11–16 places ministry gifts within Christ's purpose of building His body towards maturity. The office serves that purpose; the purpose does not exist to enlarge the officeholder. We are being formed for the good of people whom Jesus loves.

The promise and the honesty of Scripture

Jesus did not prepare His disciples for a trouble-free life. In John 16:33 He spoke of trouble in the world and peace in Himself. His victory gives courage within adversity. It does not make grief imaginary or turn every disappointment into evidence of unbelief. The same Lord who conquered the world wept at a grave and prayed in anguish before His death.

James 1:2–4 teaches that the testing of faith produces endurance and that endurance must be allowed to complete its work. Christian joy here is deeper than an outward smile. It is confidence that the Lord can work towards maturity even where the experience itself is painful. We need not call injustice good in order to believe that God can bring good from it. Joseph could say that his brothers intended evil while God intended good through the same history (Genesis 50:20). Their wrongdoing remained wrongdoing.

Romans 5:1–5 begins with justification by faith and peace with God before speaking of suffering, endurance, character and hope. This order matters. We do not endure in order to persuade God to accept us; we endure as people whom grace has brought near. The hope that develops is sustained by God's love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. It is not confidence in our own toughness.

First Peter 5:10 directs suffering believers towards the God of all grace, who will restore, establish and strengthen them. The promise belongs within the letter's horizon of eternal glory in Christ. It should not be reduced to a prediction that a minister will soon receive a building, promotion or financial breakthrough. God's faithfulness is larger than the particular outcome we would prefer. The resurrection of Jesus assures us that faithful service is not wasted, even when its full fruit is not visible in this life.

What this handbook will help us understand

We begin by defining tests, trials and temptations, considering who acts within them, and distinguishing God's good purposes from the evil purposes of the tempter. We then follow seventeen areas of testing drawn together into twenty-six chapters. These names are a teaching framework, not a numbered biblical law. Several areas overlap because a single season can test our patience, finances, faith and relationships at the same time.

We consider timing because both impatience and procrastination can damage an assignment. We look at the home through David's experience at Ziklag because public leadership cannot replace private care. We discuss economic pressure because need can tempt a minister to manipulate people, while abundance can tempt the same minister to forget them. Rejection, abandonment and misunderstanding receive sustained attention because wounds in relationships can quietly change the way we preach and lead.

The chapters on faith and the Word ask what it means to trust God without making careless claims in His name. Vision is examined in the light of Christ's mission, sound judgement and shared responsibility. Discouragement and frustration are addressed with biblical realism: a weary minister needs truth and courage, and may also need rest, help and a revised pattern of work. We consider wilderness seasons,

patience, servanthood and spiritual warfare as places where obedience must become practical.

Finally, we consider promotion and the body. Success can expose weaknesses that hardship concealed. Access, money and admiration do not make us morally secure. The account of Samson in the Valley of Sorek leads us to examine desire, secrecy and the misuse of strength. The aim is not to create fear of every relationship but to develop integrity that honours God and protects other people.

In each chapter, the biblical account comes before its application. We ask what the passage says in its setting, what it reveals about faithfulness, and how that truth bears on ministry today. A physical event may supply a useful spiritual illustration, but the illustration must not be presented as the original meaning unless Scripture supports it. David's ephod was a priestly garment; it does not become a command for ministers to obtain a special cloth. A desert is first a real place; its application to a season of spiritual dryness must be explained rather than assumed.

Recognising the test without surrendering judgement

Not every hardship has the same cause. Some difficulties arise through our mistakes. Others come through opposition to the gospel, another person's wrongdoing, ordinary human limitations, or conditions shared by our communities. Sometimes the immediate

causes are clear; sometimes they remain uncertain. This book will encourage honest discernment rather than a confident explanation for every sorrow.

A mentor can test readiness through reasonable assignments, observation and feedback. A church can examine a candidate's doctrine, conduct and reliability. Neither has authority to manufacture cruelty and call it spiritual training. Humiliation, sexual pressure, theft and violence do not become holy because a leader calls them tests. Faithfulness may require us to report wrongdoing, protect someone at risk, or step away from an unsafe situation. Submission to Christ includes obedience to His truth about justice and love.

Likewise, endurance does not always mean remaining in the same position. Paul continued preaching, but he also escaped a city when his life was threatened (Acts 9:23–25). Jesus sometimes withdrew from danger before His appointed suffering. A minister may faithfully continue in a calling while changing a method, workplace or relationship. The important question is whether our response is governed by truth and love, rather than whether we can prove that we have endured the longest.

How to read together

Read with an open Bible and somewhere to write. Follow the main passages beyond the selected verses. Record what the text actually says before recording what you believe it means for your situation. Where

you recognise a weakness, name it specifically. “I need to become stronger” is less useful than “I need to tell the treasurer about the money I borrowed” or “I need to apologise for answering correction with anger.”

The questions and prayers are intended for personal reflection and small groups. A trusted fellow minister can help us recognise patterns that we have learned to defend. Discussion should make room for confidentiality, respectful disagreement and the freedom to say that we do not yet understand. Sharpening one another is not permission to expose someone’s private struggle for entertainment or to demand disclosure beyond what is appropriate.

If you are preparing for leadership, use these pages before a crisis arrives. If you are already carrying responsibility, use them to examine the habits beneath your public work. If you have stumbled, begin with repentance and the mercy of Christ. Forgiveness is real, although rebuilding trust may take time and may involve limits on leadership responsibilities. The Lord’s grace is never an excuse to rush past the needs of people who have been harmed.

This is why the book is worth reading and sharing: ministers who understand themselves more honestly can serve others more faithfully. A congregation benefits when its leaders recognise discouragement before it becomes bitterness, address temptation before it becomes a hidden pattern, and seek help before

exhaustion damages judgement. We want our gifts to be supported by the character that makes them a blessing.

Our prayer is not merely that we survive difficult seasons. It is that we remain near Jesus within them, become more truthful, and learn to care for His people with greater wisdom. The One who calls us is faithful. We can therefore face what needs to be faced, learn what needs to be learned, and take the next obedient step together.