

Modern-Day Job: Enduring Life's Toughest Trials

Ken Roberts, a 40-year friend of mine from Cleveland, Ohio, has consistently demonstrated a God-given gift to help people on the pathway to success. Like saints of old, he “bears on his body the marks” that fashioned him and enable him to equip others to follow in his footsteps.

I still remember the day I got the phone call that Ken's wife, Debbie, had been killed in a car accident. Ken later related to me the heart wrenching details of that day.

It was a Tuesday morning that started out like any other day. Ken and Debbie grabbed a cup of coffee in the kitchen, moved into the living room and began their morning routine of preparing for the activities of the day. They then went back upstairs, dressed for the day, kissed, said their goodbyes and headed off in opposite directions.

An hour later, Ken gets a message that a nearby hospital is trying to contact him. His wife has had a car accident. I remember Ken telling me how he rushed to the hospital and was hurried into the emergency room, where his lovely wife of 25 years was lying in a coma.

Over the next few days Debbie's organs began to shut down and three days later, his dear wife was pronounced dead.

But like many of us, this hasn't been Ken's only experience with suffering. Shortly after his wife's passing, the church which Ken had pastored for over 20 years began to completely unravel. Here is that painful journey in Ken's own words.

Collapse of a Church

“I was in my early 40s, and at the time, the senior leader of

a large congregation in a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. From its inception, the church possessed that 'golden touch.' Within a few short years we had grown to one of the largest churches in our city. We were known for the passion of our worship, the excellence of our performing arts and the overall vitality of our spiritual community. We were respected among both charismatic and evangelical churches, and as a result, we had helped initiate several Christian endeavors within our city, our region and places around the world.

"But that once golden touch had waned, and the last few years felt as if we were making bricks without straw. Everything was hard. We experienced one grinding season after another. We would gear up to take one step forward only to take three steps back. One disappointment was followed by yet another. Perseverance became our daily motto and survival became our main mission.

Building Project Blows Up

"Next, we experienced a difficult and depleting building project. Similar to a stormy marriage engagement, our plans were on, then off, then on, then off again. After 10 years of starts and stops, the 42-acre campus, 55,000 square foot building and 1,300 seat state of the art auditorium—with a \$10 million price tag—was finally completed.

"But not without its first taking a titanic toll on all of us.

"With more than a million dollars in cost overruns, and a sudden down turn in the economy, when we moved into our new facility and didn't experience the expected and needed growth, the financial pressures became enormous. The dream of having our own facility quickly became a nightmare, and the previous hassles of setting up and tearing down in a high school auditorium every Sunday—for over 20 years—didn't seem like such a headache anymore.

Pastoral Team Perishes

“The final blow was the unraveling of our pastoral team, most of us having served together for almost 20 years. The financial pressures of our new building and the shattering impact of the loss of my wife widened the divisions already among us. Like a broken windshield, the cracks quickly spread throughout our entire congregation. The erosion brought about through ongoing misunderstandings, unresolved conflicts and blatant mistrust—picked up speed, and like a mud slide, everything began to give way.

“One by one, members of our pastoral team began disbanding and drifting away—some to saner and safer places, and others, not sure where to go, just anywhere but here. Cherished friendships were broken, and our once compelling dream crumbled. Wounded and disillusioned, members began walking away.

“I remained the senior leader for another three and a half years. But it was an overwhelming, hellish time. I finally resigned, and sadly, within 3 short years after my resignation, that great congregation that I had led and loved for over 20 years—was no longer even in existence.”

Like Job, God Intervenes

I watched as my friend Ken went through this deep, painful valley. It was heart wrenching. But I was amazed in what God did in Ken and what God has done through Ken during his extended season of trials.

“First, God used it, He didn’t cause it, but He did use it to shape me more and more into the image of His Son,” Ken shared.

“Second, God used my tragedy not to move me away from my destiny, but to move me toward my destiny. Now I can help others navigate through their seasons of crisis so they won’t get shipwrecked in the midst of suffering but ultimately finish well!”

4 Reasons People Quit

What are some of these common challenges that the enemy of our souls uses to derail us?

1. Disappointments – Life will bring disappointments so I find it's important to let our disappointments lead us to a deeper engagement and trust in God. Let Him use disappointments to deepen our faith not weaken or destroy it.

2. Discouragement – Life can beat us up. It can drain courage right out of us. So learning to strengthen ourselves in God, letting God's word put courage and faith back in us, is crucial to staying in the journey over the long haul.

3. Disorientation – We all go through seasons where we aren't sure what's happening in us or with things around us. This is the time to revisit what God has previously said to us and what He continues to say about us. His Word and His presence are anchors and lights in uncertain times.

4. Deception – The enemy is a sly one. He's always telling lies—lies to us, lies to us about us, lies about God, lies about His word, and lies about others. So we need to stay grounded to His Word, stay in conversation with His Spirit, and stay in fellowship with His church.

Resources to Reset

Today, Ken Roberts helps multitudes come through seasons of intense struggles whether financial, relational, ministerial or marital. He pinpoints key places where many get stuck and end up not finishing well. Survey what Ken does to help scores beat the odds and finished well on his website: .

Testimonial of Miraculous Turnaround

Davey Blackburn was a young church planter in Indianapolis whose wife, Amanda, along with their 5-month-old unborn child, was murdered during a home invasion. Davey returned home and

found his wife shot in the back of the head lying on the kitchen floor. Ken became friends with Davey and helped him walk through his crisis journey.

- ✖ Now eight years later, God has healed and restored Davey. He's remarried and is now leading a ministry helping thousands of people:

Ken Roberts, my covenant brother and friend for 40 years, is someone you can trust to help you recalibrate your life to rediscover your destiny in God and ultimately beat the odds and finish well! {eoa}

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