

Spirit-Filled Preacher Says You Can Find Purpose in Your Pain

Ken Roberts has packed a lifetime of lessons into his 64 years as a man of God. When his father, who was a pastor for 60 years, died not long ago at 89, he called me to tell me he was his hero. We grieved together, and Roberts shared more lessons with me as his friend.

We've been covenant brothers and ministry yokefellows for almost 40 years. When his wife of 25 years was killed unexpectedly in a car accident, I was present for the memorial service and gleaned more lessons from my buddy as eulogies were shared.

In the early 1980s, we were involved together in a church planting in my hometown of Cleveland. When we launched, Roberts and his wife faced the challenge of their newborn's diagnosis of Turner's syndrome. Roberts later led the church for 20 years when the influential congregation experienced unexpected trials that eventually brought it to closure.

Their beautiful facility became a performing arts center; Roberts took a new assignment in another state. Years later he rejoiced when a vibrant church made the building their home to serve the people of northeastern Ohio.

Today, Roberts is a respected author, speaker and a life coach/mentor whose online training gives hope and inspiration to scores who look to him for guidance in their unexpected trials of life.

Perhaps in these days of cataclysmic change and challenge, God can use him through this article and the embedded podcasts to give you hope and fresh vision in your situation. And maybe if

you are looking to God for a life partner, you'll gain encouragement and insight from how the good Shepherd led Missy, Roberts' bride, into his life. The very day we did the four podcasts, they were celebrating their 13th wedding anniversary!

Vanquishing the Enemy's Lies

Here's my revision of some oft-quoted spiritual laws: God loves you, and Roberts will tell you He has a wonderful plan for your life.

In his ministry to people and pastors, this thoroughly authentic servant of God admits that he had to deal a death blow to two lies that he'd never have a meaningful ministry or marriage again. Satan is the master of discouragement and deception, and Roberts warns us that he is always at work to remove us from the realm of faith for our God-ordained destiny.

"God taught me two major truths that I encourage everyone to embrace. First, God will use all things to shape us into His image, and even though He doesn't cause all things, He uses them to make us men and women conformed to Christ's character. Secondly, our loving heavenly Father is all-wise and uses the trials of life not to push us away from His plan for us but push us toward it."

Scripture tells us, "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom. 8:28-29).

"My brothers, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith develops patience [endurance]. But let patience perfect its work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4).

Simply stated, perseverance pays off.

Roberts communicates through his writings, speaking and mentoring that God is always faithful, and He calls us to be faithful in trusting Him to carry out His plans for our lives. By allowing God to mold him through the adversities he's experienced, this servant of God is persuaded that he is in his "sweet spot" helping people and leaders move through tragedy and learn to identify God's purpose in it.

What About God's Silence?

In our fast-paced culture we easily fall prey to placing demands and deadlines upon God when He's called us to wait. Roberts encourages us in our daily lives to meditate upon Psalm 23 and remember Jesus is the good Shepherd who leads us "beside still waters" (Ps. 23:2b) and "paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me" (Ps. 23:3b-4a).

We usually want things fast when God calls us to follow, and following entails waiting, resting and reflecting as He unfolds His master plan, often little by little and step by step.

In the Bible, when the Old Testament closes with the book of Malachi and then reopens in the New Testament with the book of Matthew, there's a 400-year period theologians often refer to as the "silent years." But upon closer examination historically we discover that God was at work behind the scenes during this span of time.

- Alexander the Great initiated the common Greek language so communication would be clear.

- The Roman empire emerged with the declaration of "Pax Romana" making travel safe.

– Rome's authorities established the Roman road network, making travel easier.

All of these providential developments led up to the coming of the Christ child and paved the way for the communication of the gospel throughout the known world.

So it is in our lives when things seem quiet and uneventful that God continues working to fulfill His purpose for each one of His children.

What Is God Doing in 2020?

During these days of unprecedented change and incredible, unexpected turbulence in our lives, the one who sits on the throne is working in a thousand different ways to accomplish His purpose for us all.

The prince of preachers, Charles Spurgeon, said the following: "Cheer up, Christian! Things are not left to chance: no blind fate rules the world. God has purposes, and those purposes are fulfilled. God has plans, and those plans are wise, and never can be dislocated."

Roberts exhorts us to find purpose even in our pain. Lean in and listen carefully to this remarkable man of God as he opens his heart and talks to us in these priceless podcasts. Post them and pass along the good news to your friends and family who also need this word in these perilous times.

Check out Roberts' website for resources to refresh you as we close out the year and begin 2021. Get his two books that are transformative to so many in the midst of tragedy and turbulence today: *Unexpected: Navigating Life's Unforeseen Turns* and *Staying Power: 5 Core Ideas to Sustainability in Christian Leaders*.

Here's the Deal: Ken Roberts is a wonderful friend and will be a blessing to you as he has been for me over the decades.

Let's follow him as he follows Christ and emulate the truth he wants on his tombstone: "He died leaning forward." {eoa}