



THE ORU MISSION, BASIS OF FAITH, AND CORE VALUES

The ORU vision is stated in the two prime directives God gave Oral Roberts:

- 1) "Build Me a university. Build it on My authority and on the Holy Spirit."
- 2) "Raise up your students to hear My voice, to go where My light is seen dim, My voice is heard small, and My healing power is not known, even to the uttermost bounds of the earth. Their work will exceed yours, and in this I am well pleased."

Those in leadership at ORU must have a clear understanding of this vision as outlined in the prime directives. The strategy for fulfilling these directives is found in an emphasis on whole-person education and vocational penetration.

Chancellor Roberts' message during ORU's inaugural chapel, "Quest for the Whole Man," is foundational to an understanding of ORU's core values. The model is Jesus Christ, the only whole person, who "grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 3:52). From this scripture the chancellor derived the goals of developing the mind through education, the body through physical exercise, and the spirit through spiritual disciplines under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. For a further discussion of core values, see the Institutional Audit and the ORU catalog. Student Services has also developed a "Core Values Synthesis" based heavily on Chancellor Roberts' message, "Quest for the Whole Man."

The Great Commission has also been foundational at ORU, but with an added emphasis. Not only were graduates challenged to "go into all the world," but to "go into every *person's* world" (Acts 1:8). This can be described by the phrase "vocational penetration," and is the basis of support for a wide diversity of majors. The accomplishments of ORU graduates have truly exceeded the chancellor's. Pastors, teachers, physicians, dentists, nurses, entrepreneurs, missionaries, political leaders, evangelists, authors, filmmakers—the list goes on and on. Many alumni have embraced this challenge and have gained international recognition for their accomplishments in fulfilling the Great Commission. Alumni involvement is vital to fulfilling the vision and mission of ORU.

What does it mean to “build God a university”? It means being excellent scholars, as modeled by the chancellor and the value he placed on learning. He publicly told faculty to make it hard on students, and when asked about unexcused absences, he demanded zero tolerance.

At the time of its founding, ORU was the only charismatic university in the world, and stands alone in the quality and breadth of its undergraduate and historic medical programs. Many fine schools exist within the Pentecostal-Charismatic dimension, but none match the uniqueness and distinctive character of ORU. Faculty member Stephen M. King, who later taught at Regent University, wrote:

There is no other place like ORU. There is no other college or university that has such a specially defined and spiritually powerful mission and vision statement. There is no other university where you can thoroughly, powerfully and strategically interject the unadulterated Word of God into the classroom, regardless of the class, and find a generally receptive student audience.”

What does it mean to build a university “on God’s authority”? Chancellor Roberts saw in ORU an opportunity to meld the best of Bible school training with the best of contemporary academics: a “Bible-based, God-centered, Holy Spirit-anointed university.”

“. . . if we can take the Bible school concept and put it into the very heart of the university, and build upon it and around it an academic program from which springs the different skills by which the world is operated, we have the absolute best of what we as humans and as Christians can do, the salt of the earth and light of the world, and to release our own personal calling.”

It is clear that fulfilling God’s command to build ORU on God’s authority demands a total commitment to the Bible as the guidebook for everything done at ORU. Different views are permissible and needed under the umbrella of the focus on Jesus, but attempts to undermine or move away from the Bible must not be tolerated.

What does it mean to build a university “on the Holy Spirit”? The chancellor was passionate about an emphasis on the Holy Spirit as the focal point of the ORU experience. Glossolalia (speaking in other tongues, or the prayer language), based on Jesus as Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, is the shared common value, along with the nine-fold offices, nine-fold giftings, and nine-fold fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Language is the cornerstone of culture and a human being’s most God-like trait. Chancellor Roberts understood the power of words, “the foolishness of preaching,” to build faith. He considered the chapel hour to be the most vital part of the ORU experience. The evangelist God used to heal the young Oral Roberts spoke directly to his disease, commanding it to “loose him and let him go.” A powerful idea that one former ORU professor, Dr. Hubert Morken, took from Chancellor Roberts is that:

“Words have the power to create, to bring into being, for they are the source of all that is in the natural and spiritual worlds (words from God

have more than denotative and connotative meaning, they are Spirit and Life, they are related to power and they create Faith).

“We academics who work with the visible and with language miss what is most important in the realm of the Spirit, i.e., the capacity of words to reveal the person of God by releasing the power of God. This is a relational truth connecting us to the infinite One through the gifts of the Spirit, miracles, etc.—not magic.”

“Raise up your students to hear My voice . . .” has been drummed into every student and faculty member. The university’s leaders are responsible for “raising up” students, who soon learn that hearing and obeying God’s voice demands *going*. Students are taught to emulate ORU’s founder, who heard God’s voice throughout his ministry and tried to follow his mother’s advice to “always obey God.” That need for obedience suggests a West Point model for ORU, a place of officer preparation for spiritual warfare against the forces of darkness and evil. Speaking to the Board of Regents (1986), Chancellor Roberts said:

“Anyone who reads history knows the strength and longevity of any movement revolves around its ability to reproduce leadership . . . All the toil, sweat, and tears we endured by faith will become our great joy, if a university can be a vehicle to reproduce the leaders of the future. Without new leadership in the church, this great flow of the Holy Spirit will subside. **For that I submit to you my life's work.**”

ORU Distinctives

In a thank-you letter to Chancellor Roberts, Dr. Nathan Meleen wrote: “I enjoy sharing with faculty and students the firm conviction that ORU has been incredibly well-founded, giving us distinctives as a university that serve us well in carrying out our mission and fulfilling God’s will.” In his letter Dr. Meleen discussed scholarship, teamwork, academic freedom, diversity and the Seed-Faith message. Other vital distinctives include prayer and the prayer language, the Prayer Tower and its 24-hour prayer ministry, aerobics, an honor code, and striving for excellence in all things. It is the unique combination of these distinctives that makes ORU so special.

Few Christian schools have true academic freedom, but Chancellor Roberts by his very nature embraced it. Tulsa Tribune editor Jenkin Lloyd Jones, in a piece titled “My friend Oral,” asked him how he was going to teach geology. His profound reply—“Anything that can be scientifically proven must be God’s work; how else could it exist?”—set the academic course for ORU. The university would be mainstream, not trying to sell some specialized viewpoint or novel interpretation. In a faculty meeting where the teaching of origins was discussed, the chancellor stated: “We of all people should be the most free to handle controversy, because we have the Holy Spirit to guide us.”

ORU is proud to be one of the most diverse Christian campuses on earth, culturally, ethnically, and theologically. The faculty, staff and students benefit from learning to work in harmony with fellow colleagues and students from a wide variety of backgrounds and beliefs. This is possible only because ORU is centered, at its founder's insistence and guidance, on the one perfect man, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and the four cardinal doctrines. Because these cardinal doctrines—Jesus is Savior, Healer, Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, and coming King—are the core of shared values at ORU, it is possible to tolerate a wide range of views on other issues. This provides a healthy academic setting, requiring members of the ORU community to think about and respect the views of others, and to hone their own worldviews more finely. That, in turn, opens the door to racial tolerance, love and respect for all the cultures and peoples of the world.

The phrase "Expect a Miracle," painted on the Mabee Center court and used in various promotions, dates from Chancellor Roberts' 1970 seminal work, *Miracle of Seed-Faith*. Always controversial, that teaching remains one of ORU's founding values, greatly in need of careful exposition. The three keys of Seed-Faith—"God is your source," "Give, and it shall be given unto you," and "Expect a miracle"—offer both an effective strategy for ministry (the "going") and a biblical basis for godly prosperity (3 John 2) so desperately needed by the poor.