



Farewell to Oral Roberts

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Dr. Thomson K. Mathew, a close associate of Rev. Oral Roberts for several years and currently the Dean of Oral Roberts University School of Theology and Missions, writes about the man of God.

Well known healing minister and founder of Oral Roberts University, Rev. Oral Roberts, passed away on December 15, 2009. He was 91. His son Richard and daughter Roberta were by his side in Newport, California at the time of his passing.

Oral Roberts was born in Bebe, Oklahoma in 1918 as the fifth child and youngest son of a Pentecostal Holiness pastor. He was diagnosed with TB at age 17 and was healed miraculously through prayer. A clinic in Ada, Oklahoma confirmed the healing. On the way to the prayer meeting where the healing took place, young Oral heard God's voice saying that he would be healed to take God's healing message to his generation. As if to confirm the voice he heard, God healed Oral's stuttering also.

Oral Roberts preached his first sermon two months after his healing. Later, the Pentecostal Holiness church ordained him and he pastored several PH congregations. He received theological education at two institutions - Oklahoma Baptist University and Phillips University. Leaving the pastorate in 1947, Oral started an independent healing ministry called Healing Waters.

Oral's tent meetings of the 1950's were well known. Some meetings attracted 15000 people to the largest known evangelistic tent that seated 12500. God used him to minister many healing miracles. Soon his ministry was brought to millions of living rooms through television. Oral was the pioneer of televangelism. During the 1970's, 64 million people were watching Oral Robert's programs through 525 TV stations. During the 1980's he was receiving five million letters per year, a great number of them containing money to support his ministry.



He started Oral Roberts University academic program in 1965 with 300 students. It was formally dedicated in 1967 with Rev. Billy Graham giving the inaugural sermon. The University was also a pioneer in promoting the whole person philosophy of education, claiming that education must cover the totality of a person, body, mind and spirit. Even today, physical exercise and disciplines are required of all students at ORU. Thousands of ORU graduates are serving God today across the world.

Oral Roberts served as the president of ORU from 1965 to 1993. His son Richard L. Roberts became president of the University in 1993. He had to resign due to financial and governance struggles. Following two interim presidents, Dr. Mark Rutland became the third president of ORU on July 1, 2009.

Pastor K.J. Samuel at an International Seminar held in ORU campus in 1963

The City of Faith Medical and Research Center opened on ORU campus in 1981.

This was an effort to develop the concept of whole person medicine. The massive 60-story building with two million square foot floor space was dedicated to offer medical treatment through healing teams consisting of physicians, nurses and chaplains called prayer partners. Unfortunately, the City of Faith and the related ORU School of Medicine were closed in 1989 due to financial problems. Currently, the City of Faith building belongs to ORU, but as a rental property that provides financial support to the University.

Oral Roberts married Evelyn Lutman, a school teacher, in 1938. They lived an exemplary married life for 66 years until her death in 2005. Two of their children passed away before their mother died. Oral Roberts has twelve grandchildren and many great grandchildren.



Rev. Oral Roberts with Dr. Thomson K. Mathew conferring the Doctor of Ministry degree on Richard Roberts

Oral Roberts impacted many spheres. He brought forth a paradigm shift in global evangelism by introducing healing evangelism through tent meetings and the media. He pioneered the concepts of whole person education and whole person medicine. He was a pioneer of the charismatic movement and developed theological concepts such as "seed faith" and "point of contact". He popularized slogans such as "Expect a Miracle" and "Something Good is Going to Happen to You!"

Oral Roberts was loved and respected by God's people all over the world. At times he was a controversial figure, but even his critics respected his integrity and good testimony. Like Rev. Billy Graham, he was known as one of the two great religious Americans of the 20th century.

It has been my privilege to know Oral Roberts personally and to be a part of the Oral Roberts University since 1981. I am grateful to God and to Oral Roberts for the confidence the Roberts family placed in me as I was appointed a decade ago to lead the ORU School of Theology and Missions as its dean. I will miss Oral Roberts. I look forward to seeing him again. Farewell, Man of God!