



ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY

HOLY SPIRIT
EMPOWERMENT
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Holy Spirit Empowerment in the 21st Century

A Kingdom Conversation

Context

In 100 years, the Spirit-filled Pentecostal/Charismatic movement has grown from a handful, to a global force of more than 600 million people.¹ Presently, no nation exists without someone who prays in the Spirit including those in the Middle East and Asia. Many countries are experiencing great waves of spiritual renewal with an accompanying harvest for Christ. This phenomenal growth makes Spirit-empowered Christianity the fastest growing segment of the Christian church.² A multitude of new, spiritually-empowered ministries also continue to expand the boundaries of the movement bringing new expressions, which are being described by new language. At the same time, the movement is facing fresh challenges to introducing and engaging a new generation in the Spirit-filled life.³

With more than 100 years behind us and a new century before us, the time is now for a serious conversation on the future of the movement. This Kingdom conversation must reflect on the past, discover the present, and envision the future. A united discussion should be broad in scope to include ministry leaders, scholars, and young people. The focus of this conversation would be toward introducing a whole new generation of young men and women to Spirit-empowered living. They in turn will impact the nations of the earth and reap the greatest harvest in the history of the world.

Oral Roberts University

Since its inception in the 1960's, Oral Roberts University has been an epicenter of higher education in the Charismatic movement. Oral's commitment to the whole person educational experience and pursuit of excellence at all levels pushed the University to be known as premier among Charismatic colleges.⁴ ORU has a powerful affinity among Charismatic leaders, is highly respected for its educational excellence, and has strong global name recognition. Many of the dynamic, Charismatic ministries that have multiplied over the last 45 years have been non-denominational congregations (this remains the fastest growing category of churches in the west).⁵

In the absence of a denominational connection, many of these new Spirit-filled churches saw Oral Roberts University as a school they could call their own. Thus, ORU became the accredited higher education school of choice for several segments of the Charismatic church. Through the years there have been many changes at ORU, yet it has remained a highly respected institution whose graduates continue to powerfully influence the world. However, ORU's enrollment over the last few years has declined.⁶ Some believe that the circle of ministries that claim ORU as "their school" has narrowed and that the present shifts in Spirit-filled Christianity are challenging ORU to redefine its role within the Kingdom into the 21st Century.

During this exciting season of transition at ORU, we have recognized the need for new vocabulary that will help position the university at the cutting edge of the Charismatic/Pentecostal movement in the future. While maintaining and even rediscovering ORU's initial purpose, a renewed focus must also capture what the Holy Spirit is doing in the 21st Century and position the University to once again engage a new generation in dynamic, Spirit-filled living.

Opportunity

The intersection of the Kingdom's need for a conversation on the future of the Spirit-filled movement and ORU's fresh desire to be in a place of Kingdom leadership among those who are Spirit filled, creates a unique opportunity for service. If ORU, along with others, can serve the Kingdom in facilitating a conversation on Holy Spirit Empowerment in the 21st Century then the Kingdom's need for a fresh generational connection and ORU's need for a new understanding of her environment can be realized.

Process

The Commission on Spirit-Empowered Living in the 21st Century will be an initiative of the Oral Roberts University Board of Trustees and initially be Board driven. The University Board Chair will appoint a small number of trustees for the commission to develop the parameters of the plan and work with University administration on future implications. The Board will initiate this conversation to ascertain the macro-environment in which ORU presently exists. It will also utilize this process to inform the University's future environment in which the 'whole person' educational process will be experienced.

Conversation Tracks

Initial steps in the process will include the establishing of three tracks for the conversation to take place. The conversation tracks will include:

❖ **Leadership Track:** Top-tier leaders of the traditional Charismatic/Pentecostal community as well as top-tier leaders in new emerging ministries.

❖ **Scholar's Track:** Leading scholars from the Charismatic / Pentecostal community with an intentional focus on diversity to facilitate a broad range of thought.

❖ **New Generation Track:** A combination of New Generation ministry leaders and students to reflect on Spirit-empowered living in their generation.

Internal Activities

The process will also include several internal activities at ORU including a parallel internal conversation, a taxonomy of the present Spirit-filled movement, a leadership analysis of the new influencers in the Kingdom, and more.

Congress on Spirit-Empowered Living in the 21st Century

This will be a significant summary conference which would conclude the first round of the conversation and bring together leaders, scholars, and New Generation voices for celebration, discovery, impartation, prayer, and ministry focus into the future. The Congress will be conducted on the campus of ORU.

Anticipated Outcomes

Kingdom:

- A. Questions and solutions** for the future of the Spirit-filled movement will be brought forward
- B. New contemporary** vocabulary will surface and be adopted
- C. Increased effectiveness** in reaching and engaging new generations will be affected
- D. Increased unity** between traditional Charismatic/Pentecostals and emerging churches will be realized
- E. The continued growth** of Spirit-empowered ministries will be encouraged

Oral Roberts University:

- A. Mission statement** will be clarified with new vocabulary
- B. Kingdom relationships** will be increased and renewed
- C. ORU's Kingdom** leadership will be demonstrated
- D. The University's** traditional base will be re-energized
- E. ORU's brand will** become more defined and deepened globally
- F. Students and potential** students will be motivated by a new sense of destiny
- G. The macro environment** will be defined providing a fresh backdrop for new strategic directions at ORU

Spirit Empowered Grant

The ORU Board of Trustee's Executive Committee has established the Spirit Empowered Living fund to receive grant monies for this process. A grant commitment amount of \$250,000.00 has been received to be utilized over the 2008-2010 time period. This fund will be restricted and used solely for the activities of the Commission on Spirit Empowered Living in the 21st Century.

Notes

¹ Barrett stated that the global numbers for Pentecostals, Charismatics and Neocharismatics in 2000 was 523,777,994. This incorporates traditional streams of the movement and other non-traditional streams as well as including Catholic Charismatics. He estimated an 8.7 growth rate annually in these numbers, which would place the movement at well over 600 million in 2008. (Barrett, 4)

² In 2000, Barrett estimated that there were some 30,000 Pentecostal/Charismatics added to the movement daily. Barna stated in his 2008 article that just over half (51%) of all born again Christians in America are Charismatic/Pentecostal and believe that “the charismatic gifts, such as tongues and healing are valid and active today.” 1 out of every 4 churches in America is Charismatic/Pentecostal. 4 out of every 10 non-denominational churches are charismatic/Pentecostal. 65% of African American Protestant churches are Charismatic/Pentecostal. These percentages only escalate internationally with some nations like Ghana witnessing over 50% of the entire population of the nation participating in the Spirit empowered community. Barna explains the movement toward Charismatic churches in America as coinciding with several cultural shifts. Barna states: “The charismatic orientation is most popular among the non-white population- which is, of course, the sector of the population that is growing most rapidly. Also, the freedom of emotional and spiritual expression typical of charismatic assemblies parallels the cultural trend toward personal expression, accepting diverse emotions and allowing people to interpret their experiences in ways that make sense to them.” Barna continued: “It is not surprising that the Pentecostal community in America has been growing-nor do we expect it to stop making headway.” (Barret, 4; Barna, sec. 1)

Notes (page 2)

³Albrecht notes the inherent fears within traditional Pentecostalism toward ecumenism which the emerging generation embraces. New generations seem less likely to embrace denominational or movement loyalty. Adelle Banks notes that in the global movement speaking in other tongues is less embraced than in earlier generations of the movement. Recent discussions with Pentecostal/Charismatic leaders in the Together coalition meetings in 2007 and 2008 revealed significant concerns about an aging ministry in the movement and the difficulties being experienced in engaging youth for leadership. (Albrecht, sec. 2; Banks, sec. 1; Mills, 6; Wood, 8)

⁴The ORU Alumni and Supporter Audit conducted in the Summer and Fall of 2008 by Chay McQueen LLC revealed that the highest value and most important feature in the future of ORU for alumni and donors is that ORU be a Premier Charismatic University. (McQueen, 81)

⁵Outreach Magazine's recent list of the 100 fastest growing churches in America reveals that of the top 100, 40 list themselves as non-denominational. The next largest groups are Southern Baptist with 13 and Assemblies of God with 9. Only 1 lists themselves as Pentecostal and none as Charismatic though at least half of those listed as non-denominational are charismatic in expression. (Lowry, 9)

⁶Oral Roberts University enrollment history reveals an enrollment of 375 in 1965; 790 in 1967; 3938 in 1977; 4640 in 1987; 3576 in 1997; 3387 in 2007 and a beginning of the semester count of 3067 in 2008. The largest annual enrollment was in 1984 with 4798. (Brainard, sec. 1)

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