

PERSONALITY INTERVIEW:

“ORAL ROBERTS IS THE ONLY UNIVERSITY IN THE WORLD...” – Dr. William Wilson

“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” - John 3:8. The scripture above is an apt description of the mission that Oral Roberts University is saddled with; hence, the institution also fits in for description as “Holy Spirit empowered and globally impactful.”

Dr. William M. Wilson, the President of Oral Roberts University (ORU) is presently building on the credibly constructed foundation laid years ago by the founder of this premier institution, late Evangelist Oral Roberts. He is also playing his part in helping to build Holy Spirit-empowered leaders through whole person education to impact the world with God's healing.



Dr. Wilson assumed office as the fourth president of Oral Roberts University in June 2013. Prior to this, Wilson served on the ORU Board of Trustees as Vice Chair until the election into his present post in this noble institution.

The president hails from Owensboro, Kentucky, where he obtained his Secondary Education after which he proceeded to Western Kentucky University and attained a Bachelor of Science degree. He later acquired a Master of Arts and Doctor of Ministry degrees from Pentecostal Theological Seminary. In addition, he has participated in several past and ongoing educational opportunities including the one at Harvard Institute for University Presidents.

Wilson has presided over ORU for 6 years, working with the mandate, *'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.'*

The incumbent president, with establishments of global alliances on several continents, has also engineered campus improvements such as the repurposing of a 54,000-square-foot television studio into ORU's flagship Global Learning Center, which utilizes augmented and virtual reality to take the university into the era of globalization; the building of the ONEOK Sports Complex with state-of-the art track and tennis facilities; the construction of multi-purpose fields for intramural competitions; and the construction of the first new campus housing in 42 years, an apartment-style facility with the best of internet connectivity and exceptional study and relationship-building areas.

Dr. Wilson currently serves as an at-large member of the board of the National Association of Evangelicals and on the executive committee of the Pentecostal World Fellowship. He also holds leadership positions with the Mission America Coalition and International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. He served as the executive officer for the 2006 Azusa Street Centennial, which drew more than 50,000 people from 112 nations to Los Angeles. He also forged a national ecumenical coalition with more than 250 denominations and parachurch ministries through the Awakening America Alliance, founding the national 9-11 prayer gathering called Cry Out America.

Dr. Wilson is a man filled with the Spirit of God, who also operates in the prophetic. By him, God has moved the University forward with great achievements which only the hand of God can make happen.

Wilson's wife, Lisa is ORU's First Lady. The couple resides in Tulsa, Oklahoma. They have one daughter, Sara. She and her husband, Shaun, have three children. They also have a son, Ashley. He and his wife, Jamie, also have three children.



Entrance to Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

Livinghope Magazine was privileged and honored to interview this great giant of faith who squeezed precious time out of his tight schedule to share his views about the secrets that made the University what it is today. According to Dr. William Wilson; “When people ask me about ORU, I say, “... Think of Harvard, full of the Holy Spirit”
Excerpts below:

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What is your description of Oral Roberts University in relation to the factors that differentiate it from other Christian Universities in America in particular and the world in general?

Dr. Wilson: Oral Roberts is the only university in the world we know of, that was founded on the power of the Holy Spirit. Oral Roberts obeyed God's mandate to build a university on God's authority and the Holy Spirit, and that University is still functioning today. Our core constituency is the Spirit-Empowered movement around the world, and we are the only institution serving that constituency that plays Division I athletics and uses the unique process of “whole person education” to form 21st century leaders. While ORU is located in America, it has operated for years as a beacon to students hungry for a Spirit-empowered education worldwide. Today, ORU serves students from around the globe; in fact, in this academic year alone, we have 108 nations represented in our student body. So, our commitment to the Holy Spirit, academic excellence, whole person education, leadership development, and globalization all come together in making ORU a very unique institution.

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How would you say that the vision of the founding fathers of the University is speaking loud and clear now that they are not physically present, and what are the factors responsible for the speed at which the vision speaks?

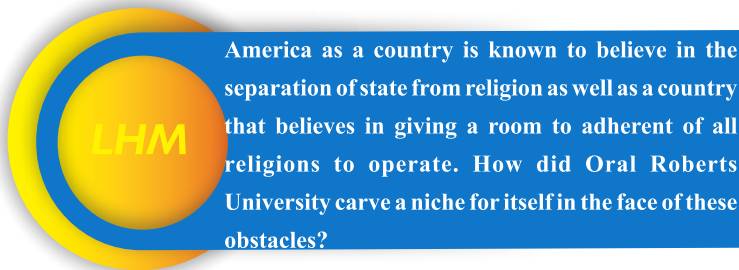
Dr. Wilson: The initial vision for ORU was a commission that God gave Oral Roberts when He said, “Raise up your students to hear My voice, to go where My light is dim, where My voice is heard small, and My healing power is not known, even to the uttermost bounds of the earth. Their work will exceed yours, and in this, I am well pleased.” These are words we take to heart. Our students embody them not just when they are receiving an education at ORU, but also as they graduate and go out into the world to fulfill the calling God has placed on their lives. The words of this commission are displayed in ORU's chapel, where students meet twice a week for worship. So every time they gather, they leave with a reminder of what this University was founded upon.

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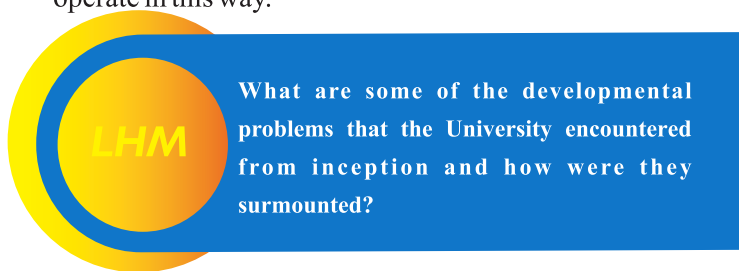
It is no longer news that Oral Roberts University is known world-wide as a global phenomenon. What efforts were put in place in publicizing the university thereby giving it the kind of fame it enjoys globally?

Dr. Wilson: Spirit-empowered Christianity (Pentecostals/Charismatics) is the fastest-growing religious movement in the world and is our core constituency. ORU is here to serve this movement. Our academic excellence, coupled with our deep commitment to the work of the Holy Spirit makes ORU one of these movement's premier institutions. When people ask me about ORU, I say, “...think Harvard, full of the Holy Spirit”. It's the highest academic excellence paired with passionate pursuit of God's Spirit that sets us apart.

We are seen as one of the leading institutions for leadership development in this movement because so many of our alumni have impacted the world dramatically, and we believe every student who attends ORU is here because the Holy Spirit drew them here. We love to tell the story of ORU in as many places as we can, and we also have a hard-working staff diligently striving to ensure that every student who is called here is able to come. We are also targeting the nations of the world where Spirit-empowered Christianity is growing the fastest so that we can help the global church develop the leaders they need in every discipline to impact the world for Christ.

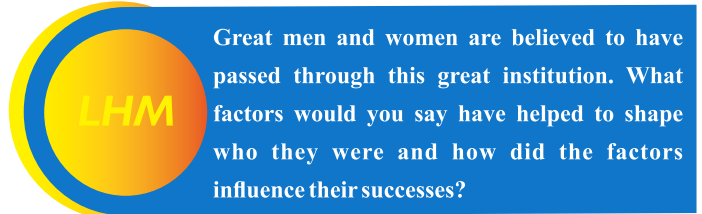


Dr. Wilson: In America, we have two types of universities: one is private and the other is public. Public universities are owned by the state, while private universities are separate entities with their own governance. ORU is a private university. There are laws of the land which we must obey, and we certainly do, but by and large, we are allowed to set our own standards for admissions and education. We are grateful that we live in a country where we are allowed to operate in this way.

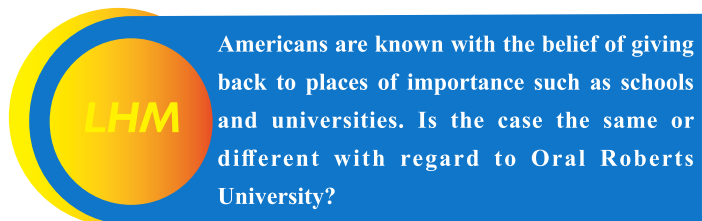


Dr. Wilson: Every university faces challenges. Sometimes those are financial, sometimes they're within the infrastructure, and sometimes those challenges are voices from outside ORU who don't understand our mission and vision and do criticize us. Regardless of the challenges we face, ORU has surmounted these with prayer, the generous support of other believers, and a staff that keeps us focused on why we are here: serving these students and our alumni were also instrumental. Just over a decade ago, the University went through a significant challenge and difficult time where debt, deficits, and declining enrollment became threats. In 2008, a new governance structure, new board and new financial resources came to the University

and the result has been a miracle from God. Presently, we have no debt, are operating in the black, and have witnessed over a decade of enrollment growth at ORU. We give God praise and thanks for His amazing help.



Dr. Wilson: One of the great things about ORU is that it draws all kinds of people who have God-given dreams. We see our job as helping to lay the foundation upon which God can build those dreams and then convert them into action. Our mission is to build Holy Spirit-empowered leaders through whole person education to impact the world with God's healing. We're not just going to educate your mind but also build you up physically and spiritually. We believe this well-rounded, whole person education sets up our graduates to succeed in whatever God has called them to do.



Dr. Wilson: We are blessed with some amazing alumni who so appreciate what they received during their time at the university that they want to give back to the next generation, allowing these precious incoming students to receive what they did and more. We are also grateful for our many friends who believe in our mission so strongly that they support us with their donations. We wouldn't be here without these faithful servant-leaders! We are in a period of significant growth and this would not be possible without the wonderful generosity of our friends, alumni and partners.

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What is one important and unique thing that students of Oral Roberts University can never forget in a hurry while in school and after graduation?

Dr. Wilson: We are building whole leaders for the whole world and to do that, we instill five learning outcomes in our students' education: by the time they graduate, they are to be spiritually alive, intellectually alert, physically disciplined, socially adept, and professionally competent. These core competencies are key to experiencing the whole person Spirit-empowered education received at ORU.



What factors would you attribute the choice of location of this great university to, and what are the advantages and the disadvantages so far?

Dr. Wilson: ORU was established in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA, and it's been a great location for us. We are in the central part of the United States, so we can be easily reached from either coasts and from both the Northern and Southern states. We see ourselves as a global university with a home base in the center of the United States. We also recently opened our Global Learning Center which allows us to bring real-time, interactive education anywhere in the world no matter where you live. If you have a smartphone and an internet connection, you can be a student at Oral Roberts University!



What can you tell us about yourself and the responsibility that you are saddled with as the President of Oral Roberts University?



Dr. William M. Wilson

Dr. Wilson: When I became President in 2013, I was excited about the challenge because of my love for students and my sense of what God was doing at ORU. I'd served on the Board of Trustees for five years previously, so I was well aware of both the challenges and the blessings that ORU had at the time. I fell in love with ORU and took it as a very high honor to become President and invest in this student body and the vision of this institution. There are always challenges in higher education. As a College President, I am never bored! I don't try to please everyone—that's impossible to do in this job—but when I lay in bed at night, I want to be able to say, "Lord, did I please You today?", and hear Him answer in the affirmative. As I look to the horizon, the future is awesome. I don't use that word lightly. It really is. The future of ORU is awesome. We have an amazing student body from a broad spectrum around the world. We have a stellar team of Board of Trustee members, administrators, faculty, and staff. And we are building upon a great history. All of these and more provide ORU with the opportunity to go beyond where it has never gone before. ORU's best days are ahead of us!

By: ‘Tunji Samuel Adeyanju