

Bold Vision

Bible Glossary, People & Places

Oral Roberts

Sermon Reference

Founder of Oral Roberts University. Recounted hearing a still, small voice directing him to heal, to bring healing to his generation, and someday to build a university founded on authority and the Holy Spirit.

Background Context

Oral Roberts (1918–2009) was an American Pentecostal evangelist whose ministry combined tent meetings, radio, and television outreach. In the program he is described as the man who received a divinely given dream to pioneer a university rooted in Spirit-empowered ministry. Roberts's ministry emphasized divine healing, charismatic worship, and the integration of faith with practical education, and his founding of Oral Roberts University (ORU) in 1963 embodied his conviction that higher education should be suffused with spiritual authority and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Roberts's public ministry was formative for the rise of mid-20th-century charismatic and Pentecostal movements in the United States. His mass media approach expanded the reach of Pentecostal distinctives into homes across America. The sermon highlights Roberts's oft-repeated desk sign "Make no little plans here" as emblematic of his conviction for large, God-sized initiatives.

In institutional history Roberts stands as a controversial but pivotal figure: he drew both devotion and criticism, yet his legacy includes a university that became a training ground for pastors, missionaries, and marketplace leaders shaped by charismatic spirituality. In the larger evangelical-historical picture, Roberts is an exemplar of how one leader's bold vision can catalyze institutional structures that shape Christian witness for decades.

Oral Roberts University (ORU)

Sermon Reference

The campus location of the broadcast; the institution whose student outcomes emphasize spiritual integrity, personal resilience, intellectual pursuit, global engagement, and bold vision. Multiple campus facilities and initiatives are named, including the Learning Resource Center and the David and Barbara Green Centre for Global Leadership.

Background Context

Oral Roberts University, founded in 1963 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, is a private Christian university established with a Pentecostal holiness orientation. In the sermon ORU is presented as the tangible outworking of Oral Roberts' original prophetic dream: a university where the work of the Holy Spirit is central to formation and where students are taught to pursue kingdom-minded careers across disciplines. The campus functions as both an educational setting and a locus of charismatic renewal, where chapel, ministry training, and academic programs interweave.

Joseph Strauss

Sermon Reference

An engineer who built 400 bridges and ultimately the Golden Gate Bridge, completed May 27, 1937. Used as an illustration of bold vision.

Background Context

Joseph Baermann Strauss (1870–1938) was an American structural engineer and bridge builder whose career culminated in the role of chief engineer for the Golden Gate Bridge. In the sermon his college-day dream, seen while convalescing with a view of a bridge, is used as a canonical illustration: a personal vision that matured into extraordinary, tangible accomplishment. Strauss's pathway from a student idea — even an audacious proposal for an Alaska–Russia bridge — to real-world engineering achievement underscores the sermon's thesis that God-given or God-aligned dreams can lead to historic public works when pursued with determination.

Strauss's professional life encompassed engineering design, construction management, and innovation in suspension bridge design. He did not work alone; bridge building is inherently collaborative, requiring engineers, artisans, financiers, and public officials. The sermon notes Strauss's construction of more than 400 bridges and emphasizes the Golden Gate Bridge as an emblem of large-scale human creativity and audacity, thereby encouraging listeners to dream without self-imposed limits.

For the believer the Strauss illustration points to spiritual truth: God gives dreams that can catalyze public good and cultural beauty. Strauss himself is not presented theologically in the sermon, but his life is held up as a parable of perseverance and imagination that believers should emulate when stewarding the visions God places in their hearts.

Zechariah

Sermon Reference

Referred to in connection with a vision announcing his son John, who would be the forerunner of the Messiah. Linked to Luke 1 narrative in which an angel appears to Zechariah to announce John the Baptist's birth.

Background Context

Zechariah in the New Testament is a priest of the division of Abijah and the husband of Elizabeth. Luke 1 tells how the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah while he was serving in the temple and announced that his wife would bear a son to be named John. The sermon references this passage to demonstrate that God places prophetic visions and calling into ordinary lives, and that these callings often presage a larger salvific work. Zechariah's narrative is instructive for those who wrestle with doubt and with the timing of God's promises.

Zechariah initially doubts the angel's word because of his and Elizabeth's advanced age; as a result he is rendered mute until the prophecy's fulfillment. The sermon uses this story to highlight that encountering God's vision may at first be disorienting, yet it ultimately aligns the person with divine purpose. The birth of John the Baptist becomes a hinge moment in salvation history; Zechariah's testimony at John's birth (his song, the Benedictus, in Luke 1:67–79) affirms the continuity of God's redemptive plan.

In the wider historical and theological picture Zechariah is significant because his son John fulfills the prophetic role of preparing the way for the Messiah. Zechariah's priestly identity also ties the coming of John and then Jesus into Israel's covenantal worship life, showing continuity between temple worship and prophetic fulfillment. The sermon invokes Zechariah to show that God's visions are often preparatory for larger, communal breakthroughs.

Importance in the Bible

Zechariah's role is central to the Lucan birth narratives; his son John the Baptist becomes the forerunner of Jesus, fulfilling Isaiah's call to prepare the way. Zechariah's testimony and prophetic song anchor the Gospel story in Israel's messianic expectation.

John the Baptist

Sermon Reference

Mentioned as the child announced to Zechariah, the forerunner of the Messiah, demonstrating that God's visions move history forward.

Background Context

John the Baptist is the prophetic voice who inaugurates the public movement that leads to Jesus' ministry. Born to Zechariah and Elizabeth in miraculous circumstances, John fulfills the prophetic role of calling Israel to repentance and baptizing as a sign of covenantal cleansing. In the sermon John is used as a scriptural example of how God's announced vision produces an agent who prepares the way for greater redemptive work.

John's life is austere and single-minded; he preaches in the wilderness, eats locusts and wild honey, and boldly calls religious and political leaders to repentance. His mission resets Israel's focus on covenant faithfulness, calling people to prepare for the Messiah's arrival. In the larger canonical arc John bridges the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament with the inaugurated kingdom of the New. His ministry and his martyrdom

both underscore the costs and the centrality of radical prophetic witness in the unfolding of salvation history.

Importance in the Bible

John is the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets in the New Testament timeline; his role is to prepare hearts for Jesus, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy about the one who prepares the way.

Peter

Sermon Reference

Cited for receiving a vision of a sheet with all kinds of unclean animals, and from that vision realizing God declares clean what He has cleansed, thus opening the gospel to Gentiles (Acts 10).

Background Context

Simon Peter, a leading apostle, receives a pivotal vision recorded in Acts 10 at the house of Cornelius. In the vision a sheet descends from heaven containing animals that Jewish law designated unclean, and a voice tells Peter to kill and eat. Peter resists because of the law, but the Spirit teaches him that God's kingdom transcends ethnic and ceremonial boundaries. The sermon employs Peter's vision as the quintessential example of God broadening human perspective so that gospel mission expands from Jewish soil into the Gentile world.

Peter's transformation is dramatic: he moves from a Jewish-centered understanding of covenant to a Spirit-led posture of inclusion. The vision directly precipitates his entrance into a Roman centurion's house, where the Holy Spirit falls on Gentiles while Peter preaches. This moment marks a decisive theological and missional turn in the early church, which the sermon calls a model for seeing beyond self-limiting identities to God's expansive plan.

Importance in the Bible

Peter's vision inaugurates the Gentile mission in Acts and models the Holy Spirit's role in transcending human barriers; it is foundational for the church's understanding of inclusion and missional expansion.

Ananias

Sermon Reference

Named as the believer to whom God spoke to go pray for Saul so that he might regain his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit; Acts 9 is referenced.

Background Context

Ananias of Damascus is an otherwise ordinary believer chosen by God to carry out a consequential act of obedience: to visit Saul, lay hands on him, pray for him, and thereby restore his sight and fill him with the Spirit. The sermon references this moment to show

how God uses faithful intermediaries to reveal and confirm a person's calling. Ananias hesitates, aware Saul's reputation as a persecutor; yet obedience to God's word effects Saul's transformation into Paul the apostle.

Ananias' obedience underscores the principle that God often uses humble instruments to accomplish great ends. His action provides pastoral precedent: when God calls someone into a new identity, he frequently uses existing members of the community to commission and incorporate that person into the body of Christ. For viewers Ananias models courage and trust. The sermon points to him as evidence that obedient faith in small acts can unlock momentous shifts in redemptive history.

Importance in the Bible

Ananias functions as God's appointed agent to restore Saul's sight and commission him into apostolic ministry, thus playing a small but decisive role in the expansion of the early church.

Gideon

Sermon Reference

Used as the primary biblical case study of a man who did not see himself as God saw him. Judges 6:12–13 is quoted to show God calling him 'mighty warrior' while Gideon identifies as insignificant and fearful.

Background Context

Gideon, from the book of Judges (chapters 6–8), is a judge raised up by God to deliver Israel from Midianite oppression. In Judges 6:12–13 NIV the angel of the Lord greets him, 'The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.' Gideon's response is a candid expression of the people's despair and his own sense of inadequacy: he sees himself as from a weak clan and as a man hiding from the enemy.

Gideon's commissioning is accompanied by tests and signs — including the fleece episodes and the dramatic reduction of his army by God's instruction — designed to shift his reliance from human strength to divine provision. The narrowing of the army is particularly instructive: God removes the human means so that the victory is clearly God's. The sermon highlights these features to underscore that God's vision often requires humbling processes that form dependence and character.

Importance in the Bible

Gideon is a key deliverer in the period of the Judges, illustrating God's pattern of calling weak instruments to enact covenantal deliverance. His story demonstrates themes of divine sovereignty, human inadequacy, and victorious dependence on God.

Jeremiah

Sermon Reference

Quoted from Jeremiah 1 to show God's calling of Jeremiah in the womb and Jeremiah's initial reluctance due to youth; illustrating that God sees potential before people do.

Background Context

Jeremiah is one of Israel's major prophets, active in the late 7th and early 6th centuries B.C., whose ministry spans the final decades of Judah before and during the Babylonian exile. Jeremiah 1:4–8 NIV contains God's calling and Jeremiah's objection. God's word to Jeremiah — 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations' — is central to the sermon's argument that God's vision precedes human recognition. Jeremiah's initial protest, 'I am only a child,' and God's reply, 'Do not say, I am only a child,' demonstrate divine commissioning that overrules self-doubt.

Jeremiah's life is marked by suffering, faithful proclamation, and an unwillingness to compromise truth for popularity. He warns Judah of coming judgment, exhorts repentance, and continues to witness to God's steadfast resolve in covenant faithfulness even amid national catastrophe. Jeremiah's ministry furnishes a profound study of vocation under pressure — a template for those who are called to speak God's word despite personal cost.

Importance in the Bible

Jeremiah is a principal prophetic voice regarding Judah's fall and the forthcoming restoration. His life and messages shape Israel's theological reflection on judgment, repentance, and hope.

Midian / Midianites

Sermon Reference

Mentioned in the Gideon narrative as the oppressors who had given Israel into their hand, prompting Gideon's calling to deliverance (Judges 6).

Background Context

The Midianites in the book of Judges are depicted as nomadic tribes who periodically oppressed Israel, particularly in the era of Judges when central authority was weak. The sermon cites the Midianite oppression to show the dire circumstances from which God calls deliverers like Gideon. The Midianite incursions caused Israel to hide in mountain clefts, and their economic warfare against Israel made national recovery nearly impossible without divine intervention.

Biblically, the Midianites appear earlier in Israel's story as relatives through Abraham's son Midian, yet in Judges they are antagonists. This juxtaposition illustrates the complexity of ancient tribal relations and the way God uses foreign powers to refine and test Israel. Historically, the presence of marauding groups like the Midianites situates

Israel in a volatile ancient Near Eastern context where plunder, raiding, and seasonal grazing often produced.

Importance in the Bible

The Midianites function as an instrument of trial and judgment in Judges; their role sets the scene for God's deliverance through Gideon and thus contributes to the cycle of sin, judgment, repentance, and deliverance characteristic of the period.

Nephilim and the Spies to Canaan

Sermon Reference

Referenced in the account of the Israelite spies who declared themselves like grasshoppers beside the Nephilim, illustrating distorted self-perception compared to God's view.

Background Context

The spies sent by Moses to survey Canaan report seeing giants in the land — the Nephilim — and their fear causes them to evaluate themselves as mere grasshoppers. Perspective shapes destiny: when God's people see themselves as small, they forfeit the promise. The biblical account (Numbers 13) depicts a people whose fear, not the objective size of the enemy, determines their response to God's promise.

The Nephilim are described in Genesis 6 and reappear in the narrative of the spies as formidable inhabitants. Scholars debate their exact nature, but the theological point in the sermon is clear: fear and a diminished self-view prevent the people from entering God's rest. In the canonical arc this episode explains Israel's forty-year wandering and the demoralization that can follow when God's promises are doubted. It highlights the consequences of mistrust and the cost of allowing fear to define identity and action.

Importance in the Bible

The spies' episode explains Israel's failure to enter Canaan and underscores themes of faith, fear, promise, and the consequences of disbelief. The Nephilim function as a narrative device to test Israel's trust in God.

Paul's Macedonian Vision and Philippi (Acts 16)

Sermon Reference

Acts 16 referenced: Paul has a vision of a man from Macedonia saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us,' leading Paul to bring the gospel into Europe and land near Philippi.

Background Context

In Acts 16 Paul receives a vision in the night of a Macedonian man pleading for help; Paul interprets this as God calling him to Europe — landing at Philippi, a Roman colony in Macedonia. This moment is highlighted as a pivot in global mission: the gospel's advance into the West was initiated by a divinely given vision and a willing response.

Philippi becomes one of the earliest and most important churches in Europe - including Lydia's conversion, the exorcism and release of a slave girl, Paul and Silas's imprisonment and miraculous deliverance, and the conversion of the jailer. Historically, the establishment of a church in Philippi marks the beginning of a systematic Christian presence in Europe. Paul's subsequent epistle to the Philippians reveals a deep pastoral bond and theological emphasis on joy in suffering — themes that the sermon invites listeners to emulate when pursuing God-given vision.

Importance in the Bible

Paul's Macedonian vision initiates the gospel's entry into Europe and results in the establishment of a significant Pauline church; it models Spirit-led mission and cross-cultural evangelism in the New Testament.

Jim Stovall

Sermon Reference

ORU alumnus who began going blind in his twenties, founded Narrative Television, authored books, and donated \$1 million to establish the Stovall Center for Entrepreneurship at ORU. Used as a testimony of bold vision despite disability.

Background Context

Jim Stovall is portrayed in the sermon as an alumnus whose life narrative moves from athletic promise to blindness and then to innovation and leadership. His experience of losing sight pushed him to create Narrative Television, which provides descriptive audio for visually impaired audiences, enabling blind viewers to follow films and broadcast content. His resilience and his decision to invest back into ORU through a substantial gift to establish an entrepreneurship center, exemplify how personal hardship can birth kingdom innovation.

Stovall's testimony functions in the program as a powerful example of redefining limits. Though he lost sight, he retained vision: he discerned unmet needs in society and formed a technology-driven ministry that expanded access to culture for millions. By founding Narrative Television and authoring numerous books, some adapted to film, he modeled how faith and entrepreneurship intersect to serve marginalized communities. His philanthropic act toward ORU models strategic reinvestment that equips future leaders.

Stovall Center for Entrepreneurship

Sermon Reference

Named after Jim Stovall; funded by his gift to ORU to raise up Christian entrepreneurs who take Jesus into business and community life.

Background Context

The Stovall Center for Entrepreneurship is an ORU campus initiative to cultivate marketplace leaders who integrate faith and business. Funded by Jim Stovall's donation, the center embodies ORU's priority to train students for vocational leadership that carries

gospel influence into economic and cultural spheres. The center's mission is to equip students with skills, networks, and theological conviction so they can launch ventures that serve communities and glorify God.

Entrepreneurial centers within Christian universities often play a dual role: they provide practical training in business formation and they inculcate a theology of vocation that regards marketplace activity as a venue for kingdom service. The Stovall Center aims to form graduates who understand entrepreneurship as mission in microcosm — creating jobs, offering solutions, and stewarding resources for communal flourishing. In the larger educational landscape such centers respond to the church's historic call to disciple all spheres of society.

David and Barbara Green Centre for Global Leadership

Sermon Reference

Named campus center at ORU where the host sits during the broadcast; presented as a facility to train global leaders with bold vision.

Background Context

The David and Barbara Green Centre for Global Leadership is a campus hub focused on forming students for leadership across international contexts. Such centers at Christian universities typically provide cross-cultural training, language study, missional internships, and leadership development rooted in theological reflection. The center symbolizes ORU's commitment to global engagement and to equipping students to operate with Spirit-led vision on the world stage.

The Greens' philanthropic support of leadership initiatives fits a long tradition of Christian patrons underwriting institutions that prepare leaders to carry the gospel into diverse cultural and political arenas.

Professor Ranahan

Sermon Reference

Mentioned as a professor whose vision led to a cancer research center focused on curing cancer with mushrooms; ORU received a patent related to this work.

Background Context

Professor Ranahan is referenced in the sermon as an example of faculty-driven innovation at ORU: pursuing a research program that seeks to treat or cure cancer through a mycological approach and achieving patentable discoveries. In the sermon this serves to demonstrate that bold vision within a Christian university can translate into scientific research that addresses real human suffering and contributes to global health solutions.

Faculty-led research projects that intersect with Christian compassion exemplify how theological commitments can animate practical inquiry. Ranahan's work to illustrate that

kingdom-minded scholarship reaches beyond abstract theorizing into life-saving interventions. The patent on using mushrooms to combat cancer signals legitimate scientific contribution and public recognition of the university's research capacity.

Coach John Wooden

Sermon Reference

Mentioned as Jim Stovall's mentor who advised asking, 'What would I do right now if I was amazing?' as a way to pursue a higher calling and act excellently.

Background Context

John Wooden (1910–2010), legendary college basketball coach at UCLA, is referenced in the sermon as a formative mentor figure whose leadership maxim encourages excellence. Wooden's Pyramid of Success and emphasis on character, preparation, and humility live out that one must aim at greatness in daily practice to fulfill a larger calling. Wooden's pedagogical method combined precise skill development with moral formation. In the sermon his advice is adapted to spiritual entrepreneurship: before making decisions, ask how an amazing version of yourself would act.

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