

ORU's Rutland Discusses Tough Leadership Challenges

✖ You may have read dozens of books and listened to hundreds of hours of CD materials on leadership. But until you've heard Dr. Mark Rutland, president of Oral Roberts University, discuss his practical perspectives on tough leadership issues, you haven't learned enough.

Rutland is the author of several books and a nationally recognized figure in Christian higher education. Prior to his election as president of Oral Roberts University, Rutland served as the president of Southeastern University in Lakeland, Fla. has pastored several churches, and also currently serves as president of Global Servants.

Now, he's readying to launch the National Institute of Christian Leadership, a year-long series of seminars he describes as "a year of study in transformational leadership." The first session begins Feb. 7.

Before Rutland get the Institute underway, *Charisma* magazine caught up with him to discuss how he gained experience in leadership, how he successfully led several major turnarounds, and what the Institute has to offer church and marketplace leaders this year.

Charisma: How did you learn leadership yourself? And what role did training have in your own leadership development?

Dr. Rutland: I began to sense a summons toward leadership, even when I was in high school. I played quarterback in high school football. Then afterward I coached and refereed, and I began to sense leadership issues in making decisions, living with those decisions, living with the consequences of those decisions. I had two events—one was leaving the last Methodist church that I pastored and going into Spirit-filled missionary

evangelism. It was a huge crossroads—how to get there and how to make it work—to launch a missions organization from scratch as an impoverished Methodist preacher and make it go in a Spirit-filled world. And the second was more or less coming out of that experience and into a mega church. It was an intersection that changed my life.

I learned high octane, high altitude leadership at the right hand of a genius I saw in Dr. Walker. I have a terrible case of hero worship. And I saw in Dr. Walker a whole new thing. It was an eye-opening experience. It was one of those aha moments. He let me go into board meetings. His business manager was a genius. I saw the opportunity. While we were there we had two and a half years of the highest growths of any Spirit-filled church east of the Mississippi. We went to 9,200 members. He and I were both preaching every Sunday—two and three times a Sunday. It was a breathtaking experience of growth, prosperity and blessing. And I felt God saying to me, “Learn, learn everything.”

I would go sit in the business manager’s office and say, “I’m fresh home from Africa—teach me business.” And I probably read for an MBA during the time that I was at Mount Paran. I saw that the preaching and the mega church atmosphere was not all there was. There was a business opportunity here for me to learn that nobody had ever taken the time to teach me. And the third intersection was Calvary —taking over a church in Orlando that was bankrupt. And it was so devastated that I wasn’t even paid there for the first six months that I pastored that church.

Then the turnaround at Southeastern, where a failing bible college surged forward to become a university. Watching, seeing, trying to analyze what happened. Why did it turn? Was there anything that we did that I could learn from and teach anybody else? Was it just a blind hog rout in’ up an acre? Was there something that happened? Taking the time to really analyze that and try and figure it out—those were water shed

moments in my life.

This may be different for everybody, but I didn't find my graduate studies to be helpful in leadership. It was theoretical, it was disconnected from reality, theologically liberal. And I think that's one of the reasons I feel so motivated for this kind of event or this kind of year—is to offer people the kind of leadership and intensity that I felt my graduate studies lacked. That's why I'm excited about it.

Charisma: So tell us about Dr. Mark Rutland's National Institute of Christian Leadership.

Dr. Rutland: Over the space of 40 years of non-profit, church, university and missions leadership you accumulate (in addition to miles on your odometer) a certain body of knowledge and experience. Some years ago I began to try to formulate that knowledge and experience into expressible realities. What does it mean? How do I teach it? How do we share it?

At all four [sessions], I'll be teaching from early morning on through the evening...very intense... on very specific practical, manageable information. That's not pie in the sky. This is about very real things: organizational definition, how to maintain and find balance, building and directing and leading for quality, excellence in expression. I'm going to go into teaching on preaching at a level of depth that very few people consider, even at the graduate and postgraduate level. Issues in preaching that would refresh your thinking on not just the simple things like structure and format but alternative structures. Things like cadence, pace, tone, voice, point-of-view, dealing with some of the craft of preaching as well as the spirit of preaching. I want to spend a great deal of time talking about turning points. That's something that is very important.

Charisma: What kinds of turnaround do you see church leaders facing today and what should they consider in the midst of it?

Dr. Rutland: I've been observer, participant and leader in three different turnarounds. There are other kinds of turns, though. There are times when an institution or a church wants to turn left or right...that's directional changes. It's not a turnaround in the sense that things are going badly and needs to go up. But it's a directional turn. How do you make that turn without turning your ship over?

Then there's turns and speed. How do you know how fast to turn it...how slow to turn it? Maybe it needs to slow down, maybe it needs to speed up. And then there are the most challenging of all--and that is turnarounds where it's gone down, it's tabled, flattened or has declined dramatically. Maybe you're taking over one, or maybe you're sitting on a situation that has gone down badly. How do you turn that before it crashes? I'm going to spend a lot of time talking about that [at the Institute].

And down to very specific issues: financing, budgeting, hiring and firing. You find out you're youth pastor is involved in a situation he shouldn't be involved in. How do you handle it? Who do you hire for what? I'm very, very sensitive to the issue of quality control. How do you get the right players to play the right position?

And then volunteer recruitment management. How do you manage volunteers for quality? How do you get quality from volunteers when you don't have a control mechanism of a salary loss? These are some of the issues: How to budget for proper resource allocation, how to do debt management...issues that I've been involved in from tiny little churches to where I am now--a \$92 million dollar per year budget.

We'll have lots of time for questions, discussion on where people are in their institutional and organizational leadership. With peers--I think they will find that even while we break for the meals, the people they sit with for meals, the people they talk to that they'll learn as much from that kind of interaction as they will in the classroom.

This is not an event. It's a yearlong process with quarterly connections. So it's going to be very intense. Some things to work on and do during the times between. So it's a process that goes over a year. Instead of just a seminar that you come and attend and go home. It is an intense year of focus. There are some great benefits that come with it and we can go into those in a minute but I hope that people will sense the depth and the quality and the intensity of the event.

Charisma: Leadership, in my opinion, isn't just doing a formula or else everybody would be a leader. It's hard work. That's why it's important that leaders have an opportunity to go to something like this—to improve themselves with this kind of continuing education.

Dr. Rutland: Yes, by having one in February, one at the end of March, one in early September, and one in early November, it spreads the four out so that people have time to process. It gives time to really process it. I think another thing about this is it's for people at any level. Somebody that pastors a mega church and just says, "Look, I just want to talk to people who understand what I'm talking about. I've got a staff of 75 people or 100 people," he thinks to himself, "I want to talk to somebody who understands multi-staff management and a budget of my altitude." Or the youth pastor in a church of 250 range who says, "I need to know where to go with my future. How do I turn my own future?" Those people will all be in the room together and there's tremendous interaction, very intense. Were going to go at things, tear at them until we will be satisfied that we've dealt with them at a pretty substantial, pretty profound level.