

Expect a Miracle

Oral Roberts was not a sophisticated guy. Men of faith rarely are. He was born in poverty, and his early years in ministry were not glamorous. One Pentecostal Holiness preacher who was alive in the 1930s says he remembers when Oral and Evelyn Roberts tied

everything they owned to the back of their car and moved from Georgia to Oklahoma. They modeled the kind of pioneering faith that requires sacrifice and humility.

It's intriguing that Oral Roberts died just as we were about to enter a new decade. His death on December 15 represents the

passing of an era. The pioneers of the charismatic movement are leaving

us. And it causes me to wonder, with some concern, whether we are

equipped with the kind of faith we need in this hour.

Roberts was the quintessential faith

preacher. But during his lifetime, "faith preacher" took on a negative

connotation because of various scandals and excesses in the faith

movement. I loved much of the early faith teaching, but I was turned

off when some of the flashier pulpiteers began to focus so much on

financial prosperity that they became materialistic and manipulative

when taking offerings.

Also, I didn't buy the so-called "name

it and claim it" philosophy because I don't believe I should reduce my

relationship with God to a formula. And I was also grieved

when

proponents of the faith message started suggesting that we can't admit

when we're sick. That is not faith; that's denial.

Like Kenneth Hagin Sr., Roberts was a

faith preacher who also was troubled by the way the faith movement

morphed into something else during the 1980s and 1990s. I'm sure he

longed for the days when faith was more about conversions and healings

and less about private jets and Rolex watches.

Today's generation is weary of hype. We

crave genuine faith. Paul told Timothy: "The goal of our instruction is

love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a *sincere*

faith" (1 Tim. 1:5, NASB, emphasis added). That word "sincere" is

translated "unfeigned" in the King James Version. It means real, pure

and undisguised. It's not pretend. And it's not mixed with carnality.

Some of what we called faith in the past

was mixed with greed and selfishness. One slick prosperity preacher

encourages his followers to wear a T-shirt that says: "I WANT MY STUFF."

That immature attitude is a sick substitute for biblical faith. Real

faith is focused on the kingdom of God, not ourselves. It grows

steadily inside us as we hear the promises of God's Word and then build

our lives on spiritual reality—while embracing godly character.

I want to be a man of faith, yet too often doubts and anxieties plague me. So when 2010 began I started studying the life of Abraham. I've been reading and re-reading passages in Genesis, Romans, Hebrews and Galatians that describe the journey of the man we call "the father of our faith." Abraham proved that if we want to please God we must believe Him—even when the promises seem impossible.

Oral Roberts used to tell his listeners: "Expect a miracle!" I believe that's still sound advice for us today. I know Roberts was not perfect, and he had some regrets about his ministry. Yet he pioneered Christian broadcasting in the 1950s, built a successful university and challenged the church to believe in divine healing. That inspires me to pray big prayers and reach for big goals.

I encourage you to write down every promise God has given you from Scripture. Whatever challenge you face, grab hold of His specific word to you. Meditate on it and declare it. Let your faith grow stronger as you spend intimate time in prayer and worship.

Perhaps you need a better job, an open door for ministry or a spiritual turnaround in your church. Or you may be asking God to restore a broken relationship or bring a prodigal

child back to Him. Don't let the ravenous birds of doubt and discouragement steal your promise.

You can expect a miracle. Let a holy anticipation arise in your heart. We are crossing over into a significant new era of spiritual renewal. A land of promise awaits us—and we can claim it if we will simply believe.

Lee Grady is editor of *Charisma*. You can find him on Twitter at leegrady