

Christ in Prophecy
Interview 33: "Roberta Potts on Oral Roberts and Faith"

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: Oral Roberts was one of the best know evangelists of the 20th Century. Many people loved him, some despised him, but no one could ignore the enormous impact of his worldwide ministry. One of his daughters has written a fascinating book about him, his ministry and her family. Stay tuned for an interview with her.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. Our special guest once again this week is Roberta Roberts Potts. She is one of the four children of Oral Roberts and his wife Evelyn. Last week we interviewed her about her views concerning Bible prophecy. And if you missed that interview you can find it on our website at lamblion.com. This week I'm going to be talking with her about a great new book she has written, it's this book here called, "My Dad, Oral Roberts." It is one of those books you just don't want to put down once you start reading it. And that's because it is fascinating, insightful, inspirational, and heartwarming. And it is illustrated from start to finish with many, many wonderful photographs. Well Roberta, welcome back to our program.

Roberta Potts: Thank you for having me.

Dr. Reagan: Well I appreciate you coming back for a second week. And I just want to start out right out front by saying I loved your book.

Roberta Potts: Thank you.

Dr. Reagan: And I mean that. I got that I read it, it blessed me, it encouraged me, it built my faith. And I tell you when a book does that, and very few do, it is just invaluable. Faith is where I want to start. I had read biographies of your dad before this one, and one of the things that so greatly impressed me was his faith. He was a man of incredible faith. And I never realized the extent of his faith until I started reading some of these biographies about him. And you talk about that of course in your book from beginning to end. And the story of how he began his healing ministry impacted me so greatly that I actually drove to Enid, Oklahoma where it started. And I went around the town and I photographed where his church was. I photographed the Civic Auditorium where he held his meeting, and I sent those photographs to him. And I told him, I said, "You know, when you started that it was just small and insignificant." But I said, "It reminds

me of that passage from Zechariah 4:10 which says, "Do not despise small things when God is in them." And I sent him the photographs.

Roberta Potts: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: And he wrote me back. Here is the letter I still have it to this day, dated October 28, 1986 thanking me for sharing that with him.

Roberta Potts: That's so awesome.

Dr. Reagan: Why don't you tell us the story of faith about how your Dad began his healing ministry? Now he was in the pastorate several years before that, but how he began his healing ministry. Tell us that story.

Roberta Potts: Well when he was 17 he first heard the voice of God telling him he was to take God's healing power to his generation. But when he was in his 20's he found himself pastoring a small church. And there is nothing wrong with pastoring a small church if that's what God has called you to do. It's just that he knew that his ministry was to his generation. But he didn't know how. And he didn't know the timing. He knew he was supposed to pray for people, but he just didn't know how. So he made a commitment he felt impressed of the Lord to read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and Acts on his knees three times in a row. By that time...

Dr. Reagan: The pain of that on your knees?

Roberta Potts: I don't know how he did it. But he was so desperate to hear from God that he was willing to do whatever it took.

Dr. Reagan: On his knees reading the Gospel and the book of Acts three times.

Roberta Potts: Yes, and I think every afternoon he was prostrate on the floor as well before the Lord asking God: "When? How? What? What am I supposed to do?" And finally after months, and months of seeking God he heard the Lord speak to him again saying, "From this hour you will have my healing power, my anointing in your right hand."

Dr. Reagan: Wow.

Roberta Potts: Well even then he still had his doubts as to you know how do I do this, and so forth. So he went to his church board in Enid, Oklahoma, which was a pretty small town.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, yes.

Roberta Potts: And he announced that he was going to have a healing meeting that Sunday afternoon. Well back then, maybe you think it was real popular, but people gave lip service to healing services, but they weren't really all that interested. But undaunted he was going to have this healing meeting. And he put out a fleece before the Lord which is something you know you can do from the book of Judges that Gideon did.

Dr. Reagan: Right. Right.

Roberta Potts: And he told the Lord, "Ok, if this is really real. If this was you speaking to me and I really am going to have your anointing to pray for people then these are the three things I'm believing for: I'm believing you will give me at least a 1,000 people in the crowd Sunday afternoon." Now you have to understand this is Enid, Oklahoma. I don't know how many people there were in the town, but not that many.

Dr. Reagan: Not many.

Roberta Potts: No. Plus there will have to be enough money in the offering to at least cover the cost of you know getting the building and stuff.

Dr. Reagan: That was \$166.

Roberta Potts: Good memory, very good. And the third fleece was that someone would be healed and that person would know it, and more importantly Oral Roberts would know it. However Dad knew I guess how to hedge his bets if you want to call it that. He still had a little bit of doubt and so he went to downtown Enid, he applied for and accepted a job selling men's clothing which was to start the following Monday morning. Well that Sunday afternoon he arrived at the auditorium and there were over a thousand people there.

Dr. Reagan: I've lived in Enid that is a miracle; over a 1,000 people.

Roberta Potts: It's absolutely a miracle. And they collected I think a \$1 or something more than the cost of the meeting.

Dr. Reagan: That's right. They collected like \$167.

Roberta Potts: And then there was woman there whose hand had been unusable for over 30 years, and she was instantly healed.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah, she reached out to him and he touched her hand and instantly, and the place just went crazy.

Roberta Potts: Everybody knew it. Everybody knew it. And you know interestingly that clothing store in downtown Enid they lost the best salesman they could have every hired. There was not a better salesman in the world then Oral Roberts.

Dr. Reagan: And from there he moved almost immediately to Tulsa, Oklahoma. And we'll pick up the story from there in just a moment.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy and my interview of Oral Roberts' daughter Roberta Roberts Potts. Roberta I want to pick up where we left off in talking about your dad's great faith. Another incredible step of faith that he took that a lot of people aren't really aware of is that he decided to develop a television program. And that was in a time when he really became a pioneer of Christian television, where it was almost impossible to have a religious

related television program. There weren't very many channels around. Tell us about that step of faith.

Roberta Potts: Well by this time his ministry had really taken off. When people know that somebody is praying for someone to be healed, and when they hear testimonies believe me they show up. The towns didn't have large enough auditoriums. The hotels didn't have enough rooms for the people who came. And Rex Humbard, you may be familiar with him.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Roberta Potts: Came to one of dad's meetings and witnessed the healing line. And he was so impressed by what he saw he said, "Oral you need to put this on television." Well honestly I don't know how he convinced the major networks to be willing to put those programs on there. Now it was his partners, people who gave to his ministry that gave the money so that he could hire the film crews to come on. It was very difficult for him to do those services being filmed because at least in those days you had to have so many lights.

Dr. Reagan: Right.

Roberta Potts: And it was hot to begin with because it was out in a tent in the summer time. So then when you put the bright lights right on dad, it was really difficult.

Dr. Reagan: Now this was in the 1950's?

Roberta Potts: In the 1950's. And you know.

Dr. Reagan: Before Cable TV and all, they only had three channels.

Roberta Potts: Oh, yes. That is exactly right. And you know honestly I believe that is one of the first reality television programs. People had not seen healings. That was not something America had seen before. In fact that was one of Rex Humbard's comments, he said, "America needs to see a miracle."

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Roberta Potts: And by the grace of God he was able to get those on television. It was the most incredible thing. And you can watch some of those programs now and they still have a power and an anointing.

Dr. Reagan: Well not only was it a miracle to be able to get one of those three major channels to accept the program. I mean that.

Roberta Potts: Right.

Dr. Reagan: But secondly the finances that were involved, just incredible costs.

Roberta Potts: It was incredible. God sent the people, and the people sent in their money.

Dr. Reagan: Well it was an amazing thing, and it certainly plowed the ground for the rest of us who are on television today. And I praise God for that. Another great step of faith your dad took was in the establishment of Oral Roberts University and that God had spoken to him a long time before that.

Roberta Potts: That's right.

Dr. Reagan: That he was going to have both a healing ministry and establish a Christian university. I mean that was from the beginning that God spoke.

Roberta Potts: That's right. That's right.

Dr. Reagan: And it was what year was it that he finally moved into the direction of starting the university?

Roberta Potts: Well it was the early 60's.

Dr. Reagan: OK.

Roberta Potts: That was the time where there was a tremendous upheaval in universities.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, yes. Students were rioting everywhere.

Roberta Potts: Yes, they were burning down administration buildings. And also I believe one of the factors was the situation that happened with my brother Ronny. My older brother Ronny was a true intellectual.

Dr. Reagan: Oh he was a genius.

Roberta Potts: And he wanted to go to a highly acclaimed, accredited university. Well at that time there was no place like that that was not secular.

Dr. Reagan: Right.

Roberta Potts: And so he went to a secular university and had a terrible, had a terrible experience.

Dr. Reagan: He was tormented made fun of him and everything else.

Roberta Potts: Yes, yes. And I think that played into the timing, probably as much as anything else. But interestingly Dad came home one day. He had finally come to the point this is the time, I've got to do this. God has been calling me to build him a university. He comes home and I can just hear him looking at my mother. My mother was the one kind of the saver you know, and my dad was the one who was always ready to spend money for God you know. So he comes home and says, "Evelyn how much money do we have in our savings account?" And by the way the savings account was for the last two children to go to college including me. And she says, "Well Oral, we don't have that much in there." He said, "Well we need to withdraw that today because we are going to plant a seed and we're going to start a university." I can imagine the look on my mother's face. But he talked her into it, and that was the seed money.

Dr. Reagan: You know that is something I noticed in all of the books I read; that whenever he would call people to make a commitment to a major project he always made the first commitment.

Roberta Potts: He always did. He always did. He believed if he didn't....

Dr. Reagan: He didn't ask people to do something he wouldn't do.

Roberta Potts: That's exactly right. And it was real. He would always spend their money.

Dr. Reagan: Well having spent 20 years as a university professor and knowing how difficult it is first of all to get a university going, and second to keep it going. And the expense involved, it's just incredible, incredible that he was able to do this without federal grants, and all that sort of thing you know. He had some people who really believed in him.

Roberta Potts: Absolutely. Well in fact I would say that is one of the biggest verifications that the healings in his crusades were real. Because it was those people who many times didn't even believe in education but they believed in Oral Roberts because they've been healed. So they sent their money in to build the university. They and their relatives and then the people who saw the healings sent the money in and they built a university for God.

Dr. Reagan: I want to back up for just a moment in time and have you tell us a story that is really fascinating. After your dad had that remarkable healing service in Enid, Oklahoma and moved to Tulsa he didn't know anybody. He didn't have any money. A local guy asked him to hold a little tent meeting and he did that. And then something happened that brought him to worldwide attention and it was the weirdest thing. God works in strange and mysterious ways. Tell us what that was.

Roberta Potts: He was preaching in Steve Pringles meeting and a man who I guess had some mental issues began shooting at him. And interestingly he didn't even come close. He was apparently a very bad shot.

Dr. Reagan: But the holes were in the tent.

Roberta Potts: Apparently so. And somehow the AP picked it up and it went all over the country that this preacher down in Tulsa, OK by the name of Oral Roberts had been shot. I don't know if it was a slow news night. I have no idea. I don't know.

Dr. Reagan: Then it went all over the world.

Roberta Potts: It went everywhere.

Dr. Reagan: People were talking about this evangelist that people tried to kill. And suddenly his name was everywhere. And suddenly invitations started coming.

Roberta Potts: God confounds the wise. It's amazing what God does and how He can use bad things in our lives to do good things. It's just incredible.

Dr. Reagan: Well it really is. You know one of the things that impressed me about your dad is that he didn't do healings in his tent way back in secrecy and then bring out somebody and say, "Ok, they were healed." He had them come right up in front of everybody in a line and laid hands on them and prayed for them in front of everyone. Right?

Roberta Potts: Yes, and you could see the people who were healed. You could see the people who were not healed. It was in your face you knew one way or the other.

Dr. Reagan: And one thing he did over, and over and I respect him so much for this was that he never claimed any power of his own. He said, "It is not, I'm not the one healing. It is God healing. He is working through me. You've got to understand that and your focus has got to be on God."

Roberta Potts: Yes and there were many famous people who would contact him from all over the country wanting to pay him to come pray for them. And he would always explain, "No, you don't understand there is no magic here. You have to come to the meeting. You have to hear a sermon about the Gospel and about faith. And you have to believe, and you have to agree with me in prayer and then God will use me as I pray for you. But it's got to start with you."

Dr. Reagan: If I remember right they had a system that they developed whereby they had a card or something. And a person simply could not be prayed for in the healing line unless they had heard the Gospel, because people would try to sneak in and not listen to the sermon and get in the healing line. Didn't they have a program like that?

Roberta Potts: He did and he got a lot of criticism for that because people would say, "Well I was turned away." Well it is true you could not just show up right before the healing line and get into the healing line. You had to have come to an afternoon meeting, heard that sermon, get a prayer card. Then you waited until your card was called which meant you sat through another sermon. Then you got in the healing line. And dad did that on purpose so that people would understand where healing comes from. It comes from God, never from a person.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, well I really respect that. And he understood the importance of them hearing the Gospel and the impact on that, and how that would build their faith to prepare them for the healing time.

Roberta Potts: Exactly.

Dr. Reagan: Well let's come back in a moment and talk about his preaching.

Roberta Potts: Alright.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy and my interview of Oral Robert's daughter Roberta Roberts Potts. Roberta most people think of your dad as simply a faith healer and I don't want to deemphasize that, that's a great gift that God gives people. But that's the only way they think of him as a faith healer. But he was a great evangelist and preacher wasn't he?

Roberta Potts: He absolutely was.

Dr. Reagan: Tell us about his preaching.

Roberta Potts: Well it was some of the most exciting sermons I've ever heard. And you have to understand there were many times there was not enough room in the auditoriums or the tents were dad had crusades. So people would stand outside the tents and they would stand the entire time. And you would think with 10, 12 thousand people there it would be noisy, people would be walking around. But when my dad was preaching you couldn't hear anything but the sound of his voice. It was compelling. Oh, you might think, "Well Roberta you were just a little girl you're a loving daughter, but what about all the other thousands of people that were there?" It was absolutely compelling. And back then they had those big, heavy microphones.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, yes, yes.

Roberta Potts: And of course it had a cord on it. And he would take it and march around the platform doing a Jericho march. I mean he had such an ability with storytelling. When he gave the account of Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace he would take that microphone and go around there. And I was always like, oh, he's going to get tripped on that cord. He never did thank God. But you could see those Hebrew young men marching around in that fiery furnace. And he said, "Jesus was with them." Oh, it was just amazing.

Dr. Reagan: Well I never realized how great a preacher he was until I went to Oral Roberts University many years ago and I went into I don't know if it is a museum or what. But there was a room that was set up like you were inside a tent.

Roberta Potts: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: And you sat there and he came on the screen and he preached that sermon.

Roberta Potts: "The Fourth Man."

Dr. Reagan: Yes, and I was just enthralled. I just sat there I was just transfixed. Do they still have that there?

Roberta Potts: No, no. We need to get it back.

Dr. Reagan: Boy you do, I was just enthralled by the whole museum it was so wonderful. Really that's when I first realized what a great preacher he was. And how he had a zeal for people's souls as well as for the healing of their physical bodies.

Roberta Potts: Oh, yes.

Dr. Reagan: Well your dad grew up in abject poverty, I mean just incredible poverty.

Roberta Potts: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: And you mentioned how this impacted his life. And you mentioned a story about a photograph and we have that photograph and we're going to show that photograph while you tell that story.

Roberta Potts: Well if you look at the photograph you'll see two young boys. One's got his head up like he is going to change the world.

Dr. Reagan: And dressed really nice.

Roberta Potts: Absolutely. The other little boy is barefooted. He has on overalls, which by the way was the nicest outfit my father ever owned growing up. And when you take a look at the little boy...

Dr. Reagan: He is looking down at the ground like he is totally defeated.

Roberta Potts: Absolutely his head totally down. He stuttered so terribly that everywhere he went people made fun of him. And it's really ironic when his name was Oral, meaning spoken word. And he would get so nervous he couldn't even say his own name. So when you look at those two little boys who would imagine that God could use the one who had his head down. It's absolutely....

Dr. Reagan: It's like Samuel looking at the son's of Jesse and saying, "Well well this one." Nope, this one.

Roberta Potts: Absolutely. But it proves a point to me that if you are willing to hear God's voice and obey you can do anything that He has called you to do. If God can use that little boy, barefooted in overalls, if God could help him to build a major charismatic, accredited university. Then you and I we can do anything God has called us.

Dr. Reagan: And that abject poverty really impacted him the rest of his life.

Roberta Potts: Terribly.

Dr. Reagan: You tell a story in your book that just astounded me about how you and your husband came over one day for a backyard barbecue and you had some new overalls that you all had bought. And you walked in and what happened?

Roberta Potts: He was hurt that we would wear those. He said, "Well is that the nicest thing you have?" And we thought it was cute you know.

Dr. Reagan: But it reminded him of his poverty.

Roberta Potts: It reminded him. It was a terrible time in his life. And also he was Cherokee Indian and back then it was not positive to be an Indian. It was bad.

Dr. Reagan: So here he was poverty stricken, a stammerer who was kidded all the time, and he was an Indian, part Indian, and Indians were just treated like dirt.

Roberta Potts: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: So that's a lot of humiliation to deal with.

Roberta Potts: Well and his own uncle said in his presence that he would never amount to a hill of beans. Apart from his mother his family thought nothing of him. And yet God, God was interested in him.

Dr. Reagan: Now about the age of 17 he almost died.

Roberta Potts: Yes, yes.

Dr. Reagan: There is a long history of tuberculosis on the Indian side of his family.

Roberta Potts: That's right.

Dr. Reagan: All of them have died. I mean back then tuberculosis was a killer.

Roberta Potts: It was a killer, there were no miracle drugs.

Dr. Reagan: So tell us about his battle with tuberculosis, and how he was healed both of that and of stammering.

Roberta Potts: Well he was dribbling in a basketball game when he collapsed and his coach took him home.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah, they said he was bleeding from the mouth.

Roberta Potts: And he had not accepted Jesus. Well back then they really didn't talk that much about healing; they were concerned that he would go to Heaven when he died, and not Hell. They didn't understand the things of God that we do today. But he was on that bed. He spit up blood so much that they had to change the wall paper at least once.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah, he splattered the wallpaper with it.

Roberta Potts: Yeah. And basically they had written him off, and given him up because so many of the other Roberts had died with tuberculosis.

Dr. Reagan: And I think he knew that. I think he sensed that they had given up on him.

Roberta Potts: Oh, he did know that. And finally his older brother who really I'm not even sure he knew the Lord at that point. He heard about a man by the name of George Munsey who was preaching nearby. And he borrowed a car and came over to the house. And he said, "Oral we're going to take you to that meeting." They somehow got him dressed. He had lost so much weight that his suit must of...

Dr. Reagan: They said they carried him out on a mattress and put him in the back of the pickup truck.

Roberta Potts: They carried him out. And he was in the back seat when he heard the voice of God for the very first time. And the Lord said, "Son I'm going to heal you. And I'm going to raise

you up to take my healing power to your generation.” That night he was healed not only of the tuberculosis, but the stuttering left. From then on he could speak clearly and perfectly.

Dr. Reagan: And he had been in bed for over a 160 days.

Roberta Potts: Yeah, he lost a tremendous amount of weight and blood.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah, in fact I’ve been reading his autobiography he said that he was confused afterwards because he coughed up all that. He was healed of the tuberculosis but he said, “I was still so weak I could hardly get out of bed.” And his mom said, “Well honey you’ve been in bed 160 days. Your muscles have atrophied.” And he said it took almost a year for him to really get the strength back, but he was healed of both the tuberculosis and the stammering. And nobody can argue with that.

Roberta Potts: Yes, praise God. I wouldn’t be sitting here if it hadn’t happened.

Dr. Reagan: And so he had a personal experience of God’s healing power.

Roberta Potts: Oh, yes.

Dr. Reagan: He knew about it and he felt that God had called him to take the message of healing power to the world.

Roberta Potts: Absolutely.

Dr. Reagan: So that’s what he did.

Roberta Potts: Absolutely, I’m so grateful.

Dr. Reagan: And it was something about his right hand. You know he talked in his autobiography he talked about the fact that it was like electricity would flow through his right hand, not his left hand, but his right hand. And he said that he always went through a period of preparation before he went to a meeting; very, very focused preparation, prayer, and so forth. And that he had told the Lord he would never go unless he felt his electrical feeling his right hand.

Roberta Potts: Anointing.

Dr. Reagan: And one day it didn’t come. It did not come. And he wouldn’t go. And the person came to pick him up, and he said, “I can’t go.” And he was tempted to go anyway but he had promised the Lord he would never would do it unless it was there. And he waited, and he waited, and he prayed, and he prayed, and he prayed and finally it came. He ran out jumped in the car, they took him. By that time they were just concluding the singing service and he got there just in time. But he said from that moment on he never had a problem with it. God was in a fact testing him if he really meant it, is he going to wait and rely on his power or God’s power? That’s quite a story.

Roberta Potts: It really is. It’s absolutely incredible.

Dr. Reagan: Tell us quickly about how you went to a meeting with him one time when you were about 10 years old. You wanted to go so bad and what happened.

Roberta Potts: Well he was a very focused person.

Dr. Reagan: To say the least.

Roberta Potts: We had communicating doors, my mother had not been able to come and that's why she didn't really want me to go. But I begged.

Dr. Reagan: It's down in Houston I believe it was.

Roberta Potts: Yes, yes. And so it came time for the meeting. I had my Bible I was all excited, and I kept pecking on the door and no one answered. And finally I got the nerve to open the door and he was gone. He forgot.

Dr. Reagan: He had forgotten that you were with him.

Roberta Potts: Well he had his mind on his sermon. But he was so focused, that's the way he was. And I think that's one of the reasons for his success. Because when he prayed for a person, there was no one else in the world but that one person. He wasn't thinking about his next sermon. He wasn't thinking about the person behind him. He was thinking about that one person, and that one person's need.

Dr. Reagan: And he prayed for over 1 1/2 million people during his ministry, and during that time both shoulders broke down from him reaching out and putting his hands on them.

Roberta Potts: Yes, but he was proud of that. He was grateful for how the Lord had used him.

Dr. Reagan: How old was he when he died?

Roberta Potts: 91.

Dr. Reagan: 91 what a great life, and what great memories you have.

Roberta Potts: Absolutely, I'm very grateful.

Dr. Reagan: Well I'm grateful for you being with us. And I want you to conclude by reading a passage from your book right there. Would you read that for us?

Roberta Potts: A final word to the detractors of my father's accomplishments. Personally I have made a decision that when I have preached to millions about God's concern for each of us as individuals. When I have broken down both of my shoulders in order to lay my hands on over 1 million people in a prayer of faith for their healing. And when I have built a major university which has graduated over 25,000 souls, trained to bring the Gospel into every persons world. Then perhaps I will have earned the right to denounce Oral Roberts.

Dr. Reagan: Wow that is a very powerful ending. And again I just can't say enough about your book. But what is important to me is something I mentioned last week in our program. And that

is that I think the book reveals more about you, then it does about him. And it reveals a person with a Christ-like heart who even when she disagreed with her father and disagreed strongly she still continued to love him, pray for him and has a great heritage to remember. Thank you for being with us.

Roberta Potts: Thank you.

Dr. Reagan: Praise God for that. We pray for you; for Oral Roberts University for great things ahead. And folks that is our program for this week. Until next week at the same time hope you'll be back with us. This is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion Ministries' saying, "Look up, be watchful for our redemption is drawing near."

End of Program