

Cibolo church learns more than just history lesson from tabernacle replica_22304

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By George Henson

Staff Writer

CIBOLO—Israelites who carried the tabernacle through 40 years of wilderness wanderings probably never expected it to end up in South Central Texas, just outside Cibolo.

Of course, Moses' fingerprints are nowhere to be found on this tent or its contents. But the replica is made to the exact dimensions dictated in Exodus, even though some materials have been changed—anodized aluminum in place of gold, for instance.

Cibolo
Valley
Baptist
Church set
up a
replica of
the
Tabernacle
on its
property.

Watching the tabernacle being constructed on property behind the Cibolo Valley Baptist Church gave pastor Gene Tone a new respect for the Israelites.

"I watched them put it up and watched them raise the walls, and I have a new appreciation for Moses and those folks," Tone said.

"I can't imagine them traveling around the desert carrying that tabernacle and putting it up and taking it down maybe 30 times in 40 years. That took a great deal of dedication to the Lord."

The tabernacle is the property of Teen Missions International, a youth missions agency headquartered in Florida.

"We have some families whose teenagers have gone off on mission trips with Teen Missions International and we learned about the tabernacle through those families," Tone said.

Church leaders saw photographs of the tabernacle, found out more information about it, and decided it "had some real value for the church," he said.

Cibolo Valley Baptist Church paid \$3,500 to prepare the site for the

tabernacle, but Tone said it was worth it. The tabernacle replica inspired the church to study the significance of the place where the Hebrews believed God made his presence known.

"Most of our people have gone through it now, and they have a greater awareness that the tabernacle was the shadow of Christ," he said.

In combination with a FAITH outreach emphasis and a growing population in the area north of San Antonio, the tabernacle gave his church members a conversation -starter for inviting people to the church, he said.

The tabernacle also gave the church a much greater visibility in the community. "Our church sat over here for 20 years and has never done much advertising. We were here, but no one knew it. Now they do."

Suggested donations of \$9 for adults and \$7 for children ages 6-11 to tour the tabernacle help support the Teen Missions International ministry to AIDS orphans and street children throughout Africa. More than 13 million orphans inhabit sub-Saharan Africa, most of their parents dead of the AIDS epidemic.

Tour guides describe different aspects of the tabernacle and the ways they foreshadow the coming of Christ. Tours begin on the hour from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Sundays. Almost 1,500 people have toured the tabernacle since its arrival in November. It will be at the Cibolo church, on FM 1103 just off Interstate 35, until April 30. For group reservations, call (210) 566-3388.

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