

# The Story Behind the Miraculous Museum of the Bible, Which Opened Today

Today is historic. It's the day the new Museum of the Bible (MOTB) opens to the public in Washington, D.C.

I wish I were there today to see how truly magnificent it is. But my schedule won't allow me to go until next month. This is such a big event that we devoted our cover story in the November issue of Charisma to it.

There's a story behind the story that I told in my column in the same issue. That is that Museum of the Bible would not be possible without the generosity of the Green family, owners of Hobby Lobby in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

In 2010, they began accumulating biblical artifacts and quickly amassed a sizable collection. The family felt a responsibility to make these artifacts available to the public and proposed opening a museum in Dallas. After due diligence, they decided to locate instead in the nation's capital. The result is the Museum of the Bible.

To get background, I recorded a podcast with Steve Green, the president of Hobby Lobby and founder, along with his wife, Jackie, of the museum. He said his family "loves God's Word and raised our families to go to church and live our lives according to the Bible. So, we decided to celebrate the Book by dedicating a museum to let people know about this Book."

He also told me about the miracles that went into the making of the museum. In a city, where it is difficult to find large properties for sale, his team found one a short walk from the Capitol and also from the Smithsonian museums along the National Mall. Built in 1923, the building was the first refrigerated warehouse in Washington, built so sturdily that

locomotives could go inside to unload.

"We were able to acquire air rights above the office building that was attached to the original building where we added one new floor," Green said. "We were able to add two new floors on top of the historical building while retaining the 95-year-old exterior. Clark Construction Company said it was one of the most complex projects they had done, with all those dynamics."

Our cover story describes some of the high-tech displays. Green told me about one I'm eager to try when I am able to visit. It's a "digital docent" with a tablet, smaller than an iPad but larger than an iPhone, that visitors can use to customize their tours and keep track of their group members. Another one is the flyboard theater—a Disney-esque theater where, through the sensation of flying, guests will be able to see where Scripture is engraved on monuments and walls throughout D.C. For example, as the visitor flies by the Lincoln Memorial, Abraham Lincoln seems to rise from his seat, and there are sights and sounds of the Civil War behind him. I can't wait to see this.

In our secularized culture, there is little that focuses on faith or Christianity. I'm excited that MOTB will present the story in a winsome way. However, Green made it clear that the museum is not about endorsing his family's own Christian beliefs—it's just teaching about the Book. This is done in three different ways: examining the history and evidences of its existence, looking at its impact on every area of life and focusing on the story of how the Bible came to us.

"If we were to set aside everything we've ever learned, just come to this Book and read it, what is the story it tells?" Green asks. "Collectively, all the books tell a larger story, which we have a floor dedicated to telling. We want people to come and learn about the Book and be inspired to know it better than they do when they first come."

I was so interested in all of this that I flew to Oklahoma City a couple of years ago when the Greens first unveiled their plans. It's such an important addition, not only to the Christian community but to the nation, and indeed to the world, since people from across the globe come to Washington to see the museums.

The Oklahoma City event included displays of biblical artifacts that were part of a traveling exhibition. One of these was the Matthew Bible, which was begun by William Tyndale and completed by John Rogers after Tyndale was martyred. A few decades later, Rogers was also martyred for his role in translating God's Word. I find this personally significant because I discovered in an obscure family history that I'm a direct descendent of this great man.

The Green family is well-known for its generosity to Christian causes. I've heard family members testify that they believe the financial blessing on Hobby Lobby—which keeps growing and growing—is because they are givers. The privately owned company is said to be worth more than \$4 billion.

Steve Green declined to say how much has been invested in the building and renovation of the museum. But someone I trust told me it was upwards of \$800 million. I can hardly wait until I can fit in a trip to Washington to spend time taking in this amazing museum. And I hope after learning about MOTB in this issue, you feel the same way. {eoa}