

On Veggies, Virtues, and Morality

Also online at: www.incpu.org/on-Veggies-Virtues-and-morality.pdf

Hello brothers and sisters in Christ (and friends),

Most of you know me by now, I think. Yep, I do think a lot, or at least sometimes I do. And, as many of you also know, I try to study and teach good solid literal teaching from God's Word - not my opinion or anyone else's, just what does the Word of God say. And occasionally I feel led to expose a false teaching or false teacher that's hurting a lot of people or even just a few. This short study is one of the second category - sorting through some things we've probably just swallowed as normal, until now (hopefully). Now, please don't just limit this to the video series that I spend the most time discussing. I mention other similar things in this short study because I'm hoping that we can all look deeper and try to identify the lies of other similar things that are hurting people the same way. Finding lies that hurts us is the start of breaking free from its bondage over our lives, and time. I hope to help some people break free from this more with this insightful study.

Okay, yeah, you probably already figured it out, but my main topic is Veggie Tales. Please allow me to first note that I used to love Veggie Tales and still enjoy some of it. I used to think they were just cute, humorous and had something of a Biblical message. Years later, I no longer think that. And, my thinking on this has only been changing as I've been digging into the Word of God more and more - over the years. And, as I do, I also continue to see that how many things around us have a different message - even a different gospel. And I hope you'll stick around long enough for me to explain that. :) By the way, did you know that Phil Vischer (*the owner of Veggie Tales before the collapse around 2004*) also apologized for this same thing? Here's how he said it:

"I looked back at the previous 10 years and realized I had spent 10 years trying to convince kids to behave Christianly without actually teaching them Christianity. And that was a pretty serious conviction. You can say, "Hey kids, be more forgiving because the Bible says so," or "Hey kids, be more kind because the Bible says so!" But that isn't Christianity, it's morality. . . .

And that was such a huge shift for me from the American Christian ideal. We're drinking a cocktail that's a mix of the Protestant work ethic, the American dream, and the gospel. And we've intertwined them so completely that we can't tell them apart anymore. Our gospel has become a gospel of following your dreams and being good so God will make all your dreams come true. It's the Oprah god. So I had to peel that apart. I realized I'm not supposed to be pursuing impact, I'm supposed to be pursuing God. And when I pursue God I will have exactly as much impact as He wants me to have..."

(source: http://www.worldmag.com/2011/09/it_s_not_about_the_dream)

First of all, I say well put Mr. Vischer! In hindsight, I'm sorry it took you this long to realize this, but I do hope and pray that you continue to try to help people back out of that false gospel you once preached. And I add to that, that though I commend him for his apology, I do hope he didn't just say all this as a business model to introduce and sell his new product. Time will tell. But, what I'd like to explore next is something deeper - even looking at the cartoon structure to see where it fits Biblically. Care to join me? :) Great!

Back during World War 1 and 2, some artists decided to start using cartoons to distract people from reality and the evil deeds that were happening with and during the wars. I'm sure cartoons were around before that, but that's when that market seemed to start expanding - and rapidly, at that, and it's continued to do so even today. Cartoons in themselves are not wrong themselves (*though they are a fictional character which does have its own inherent problems*). But my main point here is what's even more troublesome, pretty often, is the fact that they are a vehicle used to carry a message - most often not a Biblical one - and many times even an anti-Biblical message. What we need to grow in is discernment to identify if that message is Biblical or trying to replace the Bible.

So, with that said, let's review some highlights of where Veggie Tales started.

They started off with some Bible stories like their version of David and Goliath - '*Dave and the Giant Pickle*', and Daniel's 3 friends in the lion's den - '*Rack, Shack, and Benny*' - neither of which had much Biblical teaching in them, but they did have some. But, from there, the successive videos focus seemed to move more toward getting laughter out of the kids (and adults), and it moved to '*Josh and the Big Wall*' on Joshua and Jericho. Of course, right along with that were tales like one that mildly played off of the '*Grapes of Wrath*', and another loosely playing off of another book/movie '*A Tale of Two Cities*'. And then there was another one based loosely on the TV show '*Gilligan's Isle*'. And then they brought in the subject of Christmas, and downplayed idolatry with the slightest of message in the '*Toy that Saved Christmas*'. Not too much later, they started bringing in '*Larry-Boy*' - a play off of batman. And with that, they sort of tried to teach kids not to lie - '*Larry Boy and the Fib*' and then a sequel - '*Larry Boy and the Rumor Weed*' to try to sort of teach kids not to spread false rumors or false accusations. Both of those were more interested in keeping kids entertained than actually teaching the Bible (or quoting verses). I think it's important to notice that most of their videos quoted only 1 verse at most. So, without Scripture, what's its foundation? Well, it's all based on 'good logical moralism'. And then, the content moved further from Scripture to just plain entertaining story with little message at all: '*Lyle the Kindly Viking*' and '*King George and the Ducky*'. Which brings me to another key point - very silently, they brought in the bathroom humor yet it didn't apparently bother most Christians at first. God never thought those jokes were funny, and those who did need to check their own hearts, why they'd laugh about something God warns us against... anyway, continuing.

So, then they went for more stories and I won't bore you with the rest of the titles - you can look those up yourself. Already, I can guess that some of you reading this are

probably about to say - okay, methinks that Steven hates the Veggie Tales. But, if you stopped there, you would have totally missed the main message I'm trying to communicate and the theme in this short study. I realize analyzing something you and I both watched and at one time enjoyed and/or shared with our kids or others - is hard. Same here for me too. I'm not saying I now hate the videos. What I'm saying is that the more I study God's Word, the more I see that they were not Biblically-based and were in some ways a waste of time - except if I can see through the subtle false teachings from them (*to stay popular with the culture*) and to learn to not go back to those comfortable false teachings.

Okay, now with that disclaimer :) ~ If you're willing to stick around still, there's one more HUGE problem that is emerging more and more through their series.

Now, to be fair, I do need to start by noting that Veggie Tales came under a lawsuit and Mr. Vischer and Mr. Nawrocki do not run Veggie Tales anymore. But, what they started to do themselves is how Veggie Tales is continuing to be - 'religious entertainment' disguised as 'Biblical', when the Bible is not referenced and the message mirrors what the world's morality.

So, next, I'd like to look at the difference between moralism and Biblical teaching. When the world talks about something being wrong, they completely bypass anything that God in His Word (the Bible) calls wrong. When they world talks about wrong - they talk about '*being mean*' or '*taking something from someone*'. Or, they talk about '*not eating healthy*'. Or, '*not taking care of the planet*'. The world, like the devil, has many definitions of 'right and wrong', but none of those definitions will call sin - "sin" like God does. And, when the world talks about 'right and wrong' in their eyes, it's for the simple motivation of making themselves look good and others look worse than them (*judging others by appearances* - John 7:24*). Also, when the world talks about what's right - they talk about ideals that don't deal with the root problem: sin. But, they talk about ideals like - being nice to everyone, everyone happy (because they're getting what they want), loving in a superficial way. They describe clouds and harps and smiles and rainbows... anything other than talk being honest enough to rightly call evil wrong, because if they did, that would point out that they're wrong sometimes too, and we (by nature) are too proud to do that, without God's mercy to humble ourselves.

* **"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."**
(John 7:24)

So, that's the world's view of right and wrong, which literally is a religion and worldview that I think is properly titled '*moralism*' and it's a good-works thinking where man can 'earn' his way into Heaven. But, God's view is completely different. You see, when God talks about sin, He talks about how we're selfish to the core of our being (*all of us*) and we need to learn to hate that attitude in us and grow in self-control (*a word that the world hates*). And God also talks to us about our pride - which, Biblically is '*haughty self-confidence*' (Psalm 10:4**) and refusal to submit to or grow in obeying God and His Word. And another example - God also talks about

lying, stealing, coveting, immorality, and so on. But, when God's talking about lying, He talks about even wanting to lie shows a corrupt heart. And when He talks about lying, He's talking about every hint of lying or any shade or size of the lie is a lie - even withholding info to keep us out of trouble we deserve, etc. Remember God through David says it this way: **"Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom."** (Psalm 51:6) I could go on, but I think I'll leave most of that for when I work on a 10 Commandment series. ~

**** "The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts."** (Psalm 10:4)

Back to Moralism - it reduces what God says is wrong to something manageable by those who don't love God and don't want to obey Him, but want to look good to others around him and use religious piety to manipulate people and get what they want. Yet, when God talks about sin, He's talking about something a level of complete perfection in action, word, thought, deed and motivation that is so high that all of us just gaze up and gasp! Why? Because we are not even close to perfect - not even in the 1% range. And, nor ever can we be, because we are so bent on fighting for and wrongly satisfying our self-centered desires. But, the good news is here where the grace of God comes in and the blood of Jesus needs to be discussed, etc. (*Which, oddly enough, those are two more things I've not heard Veggie Tales talk about much at all*). If you don't know about Jesus' blood and how your sins can be paid for and want to know more - please just ask! Or if you want to be able to explain that better, please ask that too :) ~ here's my email: Steven.H3@gmail.com.

Some verses that explain our want to justify himself/herself and God's view on this: **"Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, but who can find a faithful man?"** (Proverbs 20:6)

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'" (Romans 7:7)

"As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God...' 'There is no fear of God before their eyes'... For all have sinned [*rebelled*] and fall short of the glory of God..." (Romans 3:10-11, 18, 23)

"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." (Romans 3:19)

Okay, so I hope you can see the difference between moralism and what God's Word calls right and wrong. Now that we've worked briefly at defining both words and worldviews, let's look at couple of examples.

Many of you, I'm sure remember '*Aesop's Fables*'. They are revered by some, though I think if they compared them to the Bible, they wouldn't speak so highly of them. Apparently there are just less than 1,000 of these stories. Let's look at a few examples.

Just a quick glance through this site makes one shake his head... but this has the ones that I'm referring to. <http://aesopfables.com/>

>> '*The Birds, the Beasts, and the Bat*' ~

Their plot: There's a battle between the animals and the birds, and the bat spies on and betrays both sides - yet he thinks that they haven't caught him as a double-spy. When the battle is over, neither side will accept him in their camp.

Their moral: '*He winds up friendless who plays both sides against the middle.*'

'*The Dancing Monkeys*'

Their plot: a prince by some monkeys and trains them to act for entertainment and profit for him. It all goes well until it's shown that they're still monkeys - he loses his means of extra income.

Their moral: '*Not everything you see is what it appears to be.*

And lastly, I'll just post this one more:

>> '*Androcles*'

Their plot: A slave flees from his master, gets lost in the woods. Comes across a lion, but the lion is obviously not aggressive and he tries to figure out why. He sees the lion has a thorn in its foot so it is apparently in so much pain that the lion will not pounce on this slave. So, the man pulls the thorn out and bandages up the lion and in gratitude the lion licks his hands, takes him to his cave and every day catches prey for them both to eat. Then they're both captured and the runaway slave is taken to the Roman 'games' where he will be eaten by a lion that had been kept with no food for days. The slave is put in the arena and the lion is released and comes out roaring and charges the slave, but when he sees it's his friend, he licks his hands and it's a happy reunion. The emperor who was watching this was surprised at the outcome, asks the slave to share the story, and everyone is all happy, the slave is released as a freed man and the lion is released to the forest again.

Their moral: '*Gratitude is the sign of noble souls.*'

>>> As you can see, sort of touching or intriguing stories with a little bit of a 'moral', but it's a works gospel that can't save anyone, but makes them feel good while they're living in their rebellion against God. It boils down to living a life built on mantras that sound good, but are hollow and build a foundation of sand. God's not going to be 'touched' by if we save a lion, or even a person, or do any other good deed - and let us enter Heaven without our rebellion being paid for. Remember, God says: "... and without shedding of blood there is no remission [*forgiveness of sin/rebellion*]." (Hebrews 9:22)

As for other examples of moralism, I could give you many more examples. I could go on to discuss Mother Goose, Barney, Disney, or any of the children's cartoons today - book form or TV form. I could go on to discuss the novels and fantasy stories that have been read by many or watched on the 'big screen' to crowds of oooh-ers and ahhh-ers, who are captivated by the glitter of things passing away because it's all they have to live for, because they don't know their Creator. But, for now, I'd like to just look at one more example before I get back to Veggie Tales newest low... yep, I'm getting ahead of myself.

Ever heard the phrase 'patience is a virtue'? That's the world's definition all right. God's Word says that God's Word is not a virtue, but is part of the fruit of the Spirit and is one of the evidences of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer (*something the unbeliever tries to imitate*). And speaking of world's definitions, that can be said as a quick summation of another literary work: William Bennett's '*The Book of Virtues*'. Mr. Bennett has been hailed by some as a conservative leader. Looking at this book, we might find that he's more like a deist (mason) than a man who loves God's Word, because he too - preaches the false gospel of moralism.

Just glancing at it reminds me of all the mantras I've heard and seen the world use in place of God's Word. Because his book is copyrighted, I'm not sure how much I can share, so I'll just sum up some of them.

His book has many pleasantries, like things that rhyme in a style different from the Kat in the Hat, but the same amount of 'message'. It teaches boys and girls to have manners, yet doesn't give them the reason why behind the manners or teach them who they need to learn to please. He also has some poems from old poets like Robert Louis Stevenson (*a renown atheist****) and others like that. Eloquent morals, with no foundation of right and wrong - only the shifting sands of society's changing whims. Mr. Bennett even quotes some from '*Aesop's Fables*'. There are some tales that you may quickly recognize by their names: '*The Fisherman and His Wife*' which is supposed to teach contentment. And '*The Magic Thread*' which is supposed to teach patience with the speed of life and to just enjoy ourselves and do what we naturally and selfishly enjoy... Both of those stories including magic. I'm sure you will remember that God tells us to flee what the world calls magic for it is engaging with demons to get what we want. I'll not bore you with anymore from his book - I think you get the picture.

*** www.celebatheists.com/wiki/Robert_Louis_Stevenson

As for fables and stories, God warns us about these:

“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia--remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.” (1st Timothy 1:3-4)

“But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.” (1st Timothy 4:7)

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” (2nd Timothy 4:3-5)

“This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.” (Titus 1:13-14)

“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty...” (2nd Peter 1:16)

And that’s a pretty good segue to my last topic for this article. So, what’s new at ‘*Big Idea Productions*’? A bad idea. Now, remember - it’s now owned and operated by a pagan corporation - a subsidiary of ‘*Dreamworks*’ which is owned by Viacom. If you really want to see the story of how Mr. Vischer lost the company, you can read that here: www.philvischer.com/phil-news/what-happened-to-big-idea-part-1/ (part 1 of 11)

And their latest ‘big idea’ is... DRUM ROLL PLEASE! A larry-boy sequel (*probably meant to become a series*) called ‘*The League of Incredible Vegetables*’. That may wow you for a minute, and so may this: <http://veggietales.com/league/videos> But, after you get over the initial wow, let’s just look a little deeper to see why I say this is a new low ~ not a little one, but a big one. Here’s some of their theme-song for the series (*reduced for the sake of space and emphasis*).

“... He’s out in front with an incredible belt
She’s all looking stylish, she’s wearin’ it well
And he’s got the moves, like a ninja gazelle
Watch us go, watch us go-oh! Here we go!
His super suction never fails in a brawl
He’s all ricocheting, like he’s outta control
And they run to trouble when you give them a call
Here we come, here we come, here we come!

Chorus:

Hey, when you’re in the dark
Hey, gonna light the spark
Hey, no question mark
The league of incredible vegetables!
Hey, like a flash of light
Hey, we gonna bring the food fight
Hey, flex our veggie might

The league of incredible vegetables!

*We are undefeatable
Eyes on the ever powerful
We are all around the world
Right where you need
We are! Yeah, yeah*

*... We're watching, we're waiting
There ain't nothing left to be afraid of
We're watching, we're waiting
The league of incredible vegetables!
We're watching, we're waiting
There ain't nothing left to be afraid of
We're watching, we're waiting
The league of incredible vegetables!"*

(Lyrics from: <http://www.sweetlyrics.com/1015404.Newsboys%20-%20The%20League%20of%20Incredible%20Vegetables.html>)

Now, the artists/band who sings this has an interesting history all by itself, and I'll leave that for a different study. And the characters they have - which are spinoffs of other super-heroes is another topic. Even the fact of them having the only lady superhero being named 'Vogue' says something very bad... But, moving on for the moment.

Does anyone here remember what God's Word says on boasting? How about this passage: "**Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.'** But I say to you, **do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.'** For whatever is more than these is from the evil one." (Matthew 5:33-37)

Did you notice the self-centered boasts of these 'super-hero' vegetables? One of the most shocking is probably: '*We are undefeatable...*' Really? Undefeatable? I know we all have seen how much children imitate what they watch. Curious, how much do you and I also think about what Jesus said about causing children to stumble into sin? "**But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.**" (Matthew 18:6) Do we really think God's not going to respond against us in anger when we teach our children to live for themselves, show off our pride, and bodies and talents, and boast in ourselves - just like the world? Brother, sister - Do we really think that God is going to let us off the hook because we did not heed what His Word says? No. We need to let the Word of God adjust our perspective,

not let the world conform us to their mold not teach us to follow in their ways of pleasurable sins (Romans 12:1-2****).

**** “I beseech [*plead with*] you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Romans 12:1-2)

And, among the many problems with super-hero ‘theology’... too many to name here, I think I’ll just wrap up on reminding all of us of Satan’s ‘I will’ statements, so that we may remember and learn what we want to leave behind so we have less to be ashamed of in His presence.

“For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol [*eternal home of the dead, specifically Hell*], to the lowest depths of the Pit.” (Isaiah 14:13-15)

Conclusion:

I’m just like you :) ~ I mean that. I’m not better than you. And I, like you, need to keep digging in God’s Word myself and let Him teach me to embrace more of what He says is right and to abandon more of what He says is wrong. I used to like Veggie Tales and thought they were cute and mostly funny... but as I mature in the Word of God, I see that God never was laughing, and I now question how much I should have laughed. And, I continue to grow in leaving behind lies and try to reach out to others with the lessons I have learned the hard way, in hopes that some of them might join me :) ~

And, brother and sister in Christ - as I have said to some, you’re welcome to follow me as I follow Christ or walk beside me as I follow Christ, but however you choose, I pray that you and I will continue to grow in pleasing our Master and Savior who shed His precious blood to ransom me/us and pay for my/our rebellion against Him. He’s the One I serve and the One I give my life for. How about you? If you’re in, then let’s keep growing and calling others to turn from their rebellion and the world’s lies and distractions and follow Christ more!

Finally, I think Jesus summed this subject up well when He taught: “**Therefore whoever hears these sayings [*teachings*] of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.**’ And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings,

that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” (Matthew 7:24-29)

Till next time, let's keep studying God's Word and sharing it with all who will listen! ~
your friend/brother in Christ, SH

