

Phil Vischer's New Bible Adventure

VeggieTales creator Phil Vischer, owner of Jellyfish Labs,  explains his strategies to reach kids today and his current projects, JellyTelly online programming and the new What's in the Bible? DVD series.

Q: What's the aim of the new DVD series, What's in the Bible?

A: To bring Christianity to life for kids by walking them through the entire Bible—from Genesis to Revelation. I think VeggieTales did a good job teaching individual Bible stories and Christian values. What we're trying to do now, though, is connect all those dots to show kids the big picture. Instead of teaching Christian values, we're teaching Christianity. Instead of teaching individual Bible stories, we're teaching the entire Bible. I think it's the next step after VeggieTales—sort of “VeggieTales v2.”

Q: Are you nervous about how this will be received by VeggieTales fans?

A: I was at first, until we started showing what we've done so far to a few Veggie fans for feedback. They loved it. They couldn't believe how much teaching we packed into half-hour episodes, or how fun it was to learn in this format.

I was bracing for someone to say, “Gee, I miss the vegetables,” and instead they couldn't wait to watch the next episode. The early response has made me a lot less nervous.

Q: What is JellyTelly, and how does this new series fit with it?

A: If What's in the Bible? is like a series of TV specials,

JellyTelly is like the daily TV show. JellyTelly is where we can talk to kids every day—teach them memory verses, introduce them to Christian kids around the world and make lots of new friends. What's in the Bible? is a very concerted effort to teach the entire Bible in 13 DVDs. JellyTelly is daily reinforcement—a lot of little lessons changing every single day. The two are really wonderfully complimentary because the same characters and values live in both places.

Q: What has changed about children's media since you began VeggieTales?

A: When I sat down to think up VeggieTales, the “transformative” technology changing America was the VHS deck. Today the average middle-schooler has a cell phone, an iPod, a Nintendo DS, an Xbox and a computer—and they're probably using them all at the same time. This is partly why we're launching JellyTelly and What's in the Bible? simultaneously—because kids want to interact with their favorite stories and characters in more than one way. The same lessons can be reinforced in multiple ways.

Q: Will we ever see a VeggieTales character appear in your new projects? If so, who would you like it to be?

A: That would be a lot of fun, but it isn't up to me. If I could pick, I'd probably let Mr. Lunt run amok on JellyTelly to make Buck Denver's life a little more challenging. A cranky, decorative gourd could really spice up the Internet.

Q: Will Phil Vischer ever create anything for grown-ups?

A: *Ha!* That question makes me laugh because on one level everything I've ever done has been partly for grown-ups. Starting with VeggieTales, but especially with What's in the Bible?, I'm always writing with one eye on the kids down in front and another eye on the 40-year-old dad sitting on the couch. Half of adult Protestants today can't define the word “grace,” a fairly central concept to the Christian faith. And

yet our primary means of reaching this guy—the traditional Sunday morning sermon—has been proven to be the least-effective educational method known to man. He doesn't want to be taught anything. He wants to watch the football game. But if I give him a DVD for his kids, and make it funny enough, he'll come along for the ride. It's impossible to change the direction of a family by only talking to the kids, and humor is the key to pulling a whole family together for a shared learning experience.

Q: How has being a parent affected what you do?

A: My kids want to watch the same stuff as everyone else's kids—Nickelodeon and the Disney Channel, *Hannah Montana* and *iCarly*. They've got iPods and Facebook accounts. With so much media rushing at them, it became very clear that we needed to do more than just make a couple of VeggieTales videos each year. Watching my own kids interact with media pushed me toward creating the daily interaction of a JellyTelly, in addition to the focused, but less frequent specials like *What's in the Bible?*. Watching my kids as consumers has made me a much smarter producer.

Click [here](#) to purchase the first two DVDs in the *What's in the Bible?* series, *In the Beginning* and *Let My People Go*.