

WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH



SERMON

October 5, 2025

Hangry

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Printed in the United States of America

First Printing: October 5, 2025

What kids' show parodies pop culture with a variety of fruits and vegetables to tell stories from the Bible?

Veggies Tales' creativity and songs teach life lessons grounded with biblical truths.

A kid raised on *Veggie Tales* claims it inspired his film career to do the same for adults. Mitch Hudson recently released new episodes of *The Promised Land*, which brings to life stories from the Book of Exodus' of God leading the Israelites to the promised land. This YouTube series does so in the style of the wildly popular sitcom *The Office*. Hudson claims the Israelites' madcap escape from enslavement and learning to create a stable community was easy to imagine as a comedy, or a *mockumentary*, as he calls it.

The Book of Exodus' story of deliverance runs the gamut of human foibles from fear to anger, envy to courage, pettiness, and sexism. Like *The Office*, the leaders fail to manage a crowd, while others attempt to subvert the mission. To portray these human tendencies with humor allows us to see all the ways God extends mercy when we behave as petulant kids.¹

¹ I often marvel at the timing of articles that appear just-in-time for sermons and texts I plan to preach. https://religionnews.com/2025/09/30/in-the-promised-land-moses-desert-trek-is-reimagined-as-a-workplace-comedy/?utm_source=RNS+Updates&utm_campaign=f07e375f7c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2025_10_01_04_35&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c5356cb657-f07e375f7c-128515002

This old story rings true today.
*God of the miraculous and the mundane,
we praise you for your
daily care and in liberating us from
the way we harm one another.
You are the God who delivers us,
You are the God who provides,
You are the God who knows us better than we know ourselves.
Send your spirit among us so that as we hear this
story it stretches our imagination, and stretches us
closer to the truth of your presence in our lives today
and the freedom we have when we devote ourselves to you. Amen.*

Exodus 16:2-5, 9-18

²The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and ate our fill of bread, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way *I will test them*, whether they will follow my instruction or not. ⁵And, On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days."

⁹Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites: ‘Draw near to the LORD, for he has heard your complaining.’ ”

¹⁰And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

¹¹The LORD spoke to Moses, ¹²“I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’ ”

¹³In the evening quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground.

¹⁵When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.

¹⁶This is what the LORD has commanded: Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer per person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents.”

¹⁷The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less. ¹⁸But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered

much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed.

Hangry. The word “hangry” made its way into the Oxford English Dictionary and into research studies at The Cleveland Clinic.

Hangry is being hungry and angry.

That rumbling in the belly heightens a sense of anger, so that some will hurl their rage at anything, even if not the root cause.

It describes the basic human feeling that consumes and at time cripples us. Those Israelites were hangry. No matter how old we might think this story is or discount it as too far-fetched, this story is of us.

Although the Israelites raced from Egypt with little notice, at forty-five days into their freedom they should not have been starving or destitute. Before they left, Pharaoh gave them permission to plunder the Egyptians. The Israelites loaded themselves with silver and gold along with herds and provisions.

Maybe part of their anger stems from carrying so much stuff?

When the Israelites started their hangry rant, it might have been lunch time. But it was likely the pent-up anxiety of forty-five days without routines or plans for how they would grow and harvest food.

Wandering in the wilderness is as much an intellectual disarray as physical so that it provokes all out fear.

This perceived food crisis reveals their faith crisis. Searching for an object to hurl their murmuring against, Moses became their target.

We heard their accusations against him – “We had fleshpots and ate our fill of bread in Egypt. Because of you, we will die of famine.” Their past had been an unlivable certainty and now the future looks like an unbearable uncertainty.

We need to get behind the story.

Day after day, year after year, generation after generation being enslaved induced what we now describe as intergenerational trauma. Enslavement kept them from ever allowing their dreams to take flight and consequently creating memories of those instances when they took risks and flourished. They ate, drank, and slept only fear.

When your routine and the structures that give you stability are gone, even if they stifle you, freedom is hard. When all

you've ever done is blame someone else for your misery, to take responsibility for your welfare also makes freedom hard.

In the Israelites' newly found freedom, they lacked individual and shared practices of how to live...and they lacked disciplines of how and who to trust.

God hears their murmurings.

Even though God's miraculous plagues of frogs, and lice, and flies, and thunder and hail to name a few, got their attention, they had no experience of trusting God.

Even though the miraculous parting of the Red Sea delivered them through threatening peril, they see no evidence of God is present in their day-to-day living.

So, God needs to teach them. The text reads: God will *test* them. The word "test" and the act of testing is another way to describe the way the people learn.

This is a story of God teaching freedom.

When the *man hu*, meaning literally "what is it," falls from the sky, the Israelites are dumbfounded. They had never seen anything like it but found it sweet and satisfying. Each person is to gather enough for one day's consumption, nothing more and nothing less.

We might expect at first the Israelites' anxiety prevails. Later on, is a story of those who ignore God's promise and hoard extra rations. But the next day, that mantra "gotta look out for yourself" proves false. They found worms rotting their secret stash. They failed the test. And God begins the next day to teach them.

Eventually they learn that greed does not fill their bellies. Nor does selfishness create anything of lasting value.

During that first week, the "what is it" substance appears for five days. And, as promised, a double portion on the sixth day remains fresh so they could rest on the Sabbath. That gives them the most remarkable gift. God invites them to rest, something never known while enslaved.

And, the next week, the "what is it" appears, in the same routine.

God's miracle is just so ordinary and reliable it doesn't seem like a miracle this time...daily bread in the morning and meat in the evening...just like the pattern of creation...morning and evening. In a reliable pattern, God teaches them to trust. God teaches them how to live in freedom.

Imagine a young Israelite couple who fled from Egypt with an infant. Any new parent knows that nothing is normal with a new infant, let alone running for your life.

Despite the cruelty of enslavement, they probably knew who to trust in their community, had they remained in Egypt.

But, they do what everyone else does. They gather an *omer* every day for each person in the family. Whew. Crisis averted.

After two weeks, they relax a bit. God provides the *man hu* in the morning and meat in the evening. After forty days of God unfailingly delivering, their routine allows them to sleep more easily at night. Forty weeks later, they settle as a family with a growing child. The community's tension also calms, not from a particular place, but by learning that God provides.

By the time this couple's kids are old enough for chores, it becomes the kids' job to gather the *man hu*, just like my dad gathered eggs each morning.

As the kids grow, it never occurs to them to question the *man hu*, or "what is it." At mealtime, they offer a prayer to God for gratitude for the blessings of food. As reliable as the sun rises and sets, God provides.

Along with *man hu*, over the years and decades God provides the Israelites with the Ten Best Ways, ten laws, to encourage their thriving as a community. Freedom comes with responsibilities and boundaries to respect.

God teaches them to forgive by forgiving their golden calf debacle and myriad other stumbles. Over time, they finally see God's enduring presence that they'd never noticed before in that dust cloud.

(It's not a stretch to anticipate Hudson's *mockumentary* of the hilarious ways we humans argue with one another and bump into one another before we learn to trust one another, and respect the authority of God. Just like in *The Office*, we sometimes make ourselves very un-loveable.)

We can imagine the Israelites' kids grow, marry, and start their own families. Parents die and the next generation begins. Throughout it all God provides.

In scripture "forty" signifies a period of testing that transforms, whether forty days in one person's life or forty years in a community's life. After forty years, the Israelites shed the old way of life. Their new routines rewrite the old tropes of fear and hatred with reliable trust in one another, the community, and God.

God teaches them

the essence of enough

to let go of the greed that leads to loneliness

to let grace of failing a test inspire them to try again

to allow inherent human tenderness to take root within themselves.

Today, we will taste this story's bread from heaven. By presenting Bibles to our younger generations, we proclaim the power of our sacred text to teach us to whom we belong and the possibilities given by God.

And, by gathering around the table, we remember the miracle of Jesus nurturing us with both story and his very self. He teaches us to pray, "give us this day our daily bread." "Forgive us." "Feed us." Trust these words since he is the one who will claim us.



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