

# Balaam's Donkey

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Sunday Plan

SCRIPTURE

Numbers 22–24

MEMORY VERSE

Numbers 23:19

OPTIONAL VIDEO

God's Story: Balaam

<https://southside.cc/394-361>

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*God's Word always stands.*

## For the Teacher

Read this before you teach. The kids have been walking with God's people through Exodus and into the wilderness years of Numbers. Today the story zooms out — for one strange, funny, deadly serious episode — to a king who tries to *hire someone to curse God's people*, and to the donkey God uses to stop him. The kids should leave with one idea firmly in place.

### KEY TRUTH

God's Word always stands.

**Where this story sits.** Numbers 22–24 happens late in the wilderness journey. Israel is camped on the plains of Moab, just across the Jordan from the Promised Land. King Balak of Moab is terrified — Israel has rolled through every nation in their path — so he sends for a famous prophet-for-hire named Balaam and offers him silver to curse Israel. The whole plot is Balak trying to *use words* to undo what God has already promised to do. He fails. Repeatedly. Hilariously. The donkey is the punchline God writes to make sure nobody misses the point.

**God's Word is not negotiable.** Underneath the talking-donkey humor is a serious claim: God said he would bless Israel; nobody — not a king with money, not a prophet with a reputation — can change that. Numbers 23:19 is the spine of the lesson: "God is not a man that he should lie, or a son of man that he should change his mind." That applies to his blessings, his commands, his rescue plan, and the gospel that comes much later. What God says, he does. The kids need to feel that as solid ground.

**Don't moralize away the strangeness.** This story is *weird* — an angel with a sword, a donkey that speaks, a prophet who keeps trying to curse and ends up blessing four times in a row. Let it be weird. The strangeness is part of the point: God is willing to be funny, loud, unmissable when his Word is on the line. The kids will remember the talking donkey. Use that memory as the hook for the truth: even the donkey could see what the prophet wouldn't.

**What we're skipping and why.** Balaam's later story (Numbers 31:16, 2 Peter 2:15, Revelation 2:14) is dark — he eventually leads Israel into sin and dies for it. That's a harder lesson for older kids. Stay in chapters 22–24 today. Stay with the donkey, the angel, the four blessings, and the bottom line.

**Repeat the bottom line all morning.** Say it at least six times. Have the kids say it back. Write it on the board. End with it.

### MATERIALS

- Bibles for every student
- Whiteboard or large paper, a regular dry-erase marker, a permanent marker, a paper towel
- Pencils, crayons or colored pencils
- Activity sheets (printed in advance from this week's activities — pick what you'll use)

## 1. Gather

Welcome the kids back. Tell them today's story is one of the strangest — and funniest — stories in the whole Bible. There's a king who tries to pay a prophet to curse God's people. There's an angel with a sword. And there is a *donkey that talks*. But under all the weirdness is one big idea, and they should listen for it.

### ASK

*If a king said one thing and God said the opposite, which one would actually happen?*

Let two or three kids answer. Some will say God, some will hesitate. Don't correct yet — just collect the answers. Then tell them: today they're going to find out, and the answer comes wrapped up in one

of the strangest stories in Scripture.

Write the bottom line on the board:

**SAY**  
*God's Word always stands.*

## 2. The Story

### Setting the Stage

Tell them, in your own words: God's people have been wandering in the wilderness for a long time. They're almost to the land God promised them. They're camped right across the river from it. But there's a king nearby — King Balak of Moab — who is *terrified* of Israel. He has watched them roll through every army that came against them. So he comes up with a plan. Instead of fighting them, he tries to *curse* them. He sends messengers far away to find a famous prophet named Balaam, and he offers him silver to come say bad words over God's people.

That's what this story is about. A king trying to use words to undo what God has already said.

### Balak Hires a Curse

Have everyone open to Numbers 22:1. Pick a confident reader.

#### Numbers 22:1–6

##### DISCUSSION

1. What did King Balak want Balaam to do?

→ *Curse Israel — say bad words over them so they would lose. Balak thought a curse from the right person could change what God had promised. He was wrong, but that was his plan.*

2. Why was Balak so afraid of Israel?

→ *Because God was with them. He had seen what God did at the Red Sea, in the wilderness, against every army Israel had faced. Balak knew this wasn't just a strong people — there was a strong God behind them.*

Now have a different student read what God says when Balaam asks for permission to go:

#### Numbers 22:12

Tell them, in your own words: God is clear. *Do not go. Do not curse these people. They are blessed.* That's God's Word on the matter. And God's Word always stands.

### The Donkey Sees What Balaam Doesn't

Balaam goes anyway. (Read **Numbers 22:20–22** to them yourself if you want — God permits him to go but is angry that his heart is in the wrong place.) On the road, God sends an angel with a drawn sword to block Balaam's path. The donkey sees the angel. Balaam doesn't. This is where the story gets famous.

Have everyone turn to Numbers 22:22. Pick a different reader.

#### Numbers 22:22–31

## DISCUSSION

1. Who could see the angel — Balaam the prophet, or the donkey?

→ *The donkey. Let that land. The “expert” couldn’t see what God was doing. The animal could. Sometimes the people who think they’re the most important miss what God is doing right in front of them.*

2. What did God do that made the donkey speak?

→ *He opened the donkey’s mouth. The donkey didn’t suddenly become smart — God did a miracle so the donkey could say what needed to be said. When God wants his Word out, even an animal can deliver it.*

3. What did the angel finally tell Balaam in verse 31?

→ *That the donkey had saved his life. If the donkey hadn’t turned away, Balaam would be dead. The donkey was protecting him by obeying God — even when Balaam was beating it for it.*

## NOTE

The kids will laugh at the talking donkey. Let them. Then bring them back: this isn’t just a funny story. It’s God making *very sure* his Word gets through to a man who didn’t want to listen.

## Four Times Blessed

Tell them: Balaam finally gets to King Balak. The king takes him up on a hill to look down at the Israelite camp and curse them. Balaam opens his mouth — and a *blessing* comes out. The king is furious. He moves Balaam to a different hill. Balaam tries again. Another blessing. The king tries one more time. *Another blessing*. Four times in a row, Balaam tries to curse God’s people and four times in a row, blessings come out instead.

Have a student look up and read what Balaam himself says about it:

## Numbers 23:19–20

Pause. Have them read verse 19 again, slowly. *“God is not a man that he should lie, or a son of man that he should change his mind.”* That’s the memory verse. That’s the whole point of the story. King Balak couldn’t change God’s Word. The famous prophet couldn’t change God’s Word. Even Balaam himself, when he opened his mouth, *couldn’t say anything except what God gave him to say*.

## 3. The Point

Say the bottom line again, with the kids:

## SAY

*God’s Word always stands.*

## You Can’t Erase God’s Word

Pull out the whiteboard, the regular marker, the permanent marker, and the paper towel. Tell the class you’re going to do an experiment.

Write **MY PLANS** on the board with the regular marker. Erase it with the paper towel — easy, gone in one wipe. Then write **GOD’S WORD** on the board with the permanent marker. Try to wipe it off. It won’t come off.

## SAY

*Our plans can change. God's Word doesn't. Balak couldn't wipe it off. Balaam couldn't wipe it off. Nothing in this room can wipe it off. God's Word always stands.*

(Quick housekeeping: rubbing alcohol or a dry-erase marker drawn over the permanent marker will get it off the board after class. Don't tell the kids that yet.)

### The Memory Verse

Have everyone turn to Numbers 23:19. Read it together:

## SCRIPTURE

*Numbers 23:19*

*God is not a man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?*

Read it together three ways: all together normally, all together in a whisper, then once with their hands held flat in front of them like a steady, solid surface.

Tell them: this verse is talking about every word God has ever said. His promises to Abraham. His commandments at Sinai. His rescue at the Red Sea. The whole Bible. What God says, he does. What he promises, he keeps.

### What This Means For Us

## DISCUSSION

1. If God's Word always stands, what's one promise from God you can trust this week, even when something feels hard?

→ *Listen for: God is with me, God loves me, God hears me, God forgives me, God will never leave me. Don't help too fast — let them name promises themselves. The point is connecting "God's Word always stands" to specific things they can lean on.*

2. Sometimes people try to tell us things that go against what God says. What do we do then?

→ *Believe God. Even if the loudest voice in the room is saying something different, God's Word still stands. Balaam's story is the proof — kings, money, fame, none of it could change what God said.*

Say the bottom line one more time, with the kids:

## SAY

*God's Word always stands.*

### Closing Prayer

## PRAY

*God, you said you would bless your people, and not even a king with silver could change it. You said you would rescue them, and you did. You said you would send a Savior, and you did. Thank you that your Word always stands. Help us trust what you've said this week, even when other voices are louder. Amen.*

## 4. The Work

Pick one or more activities from this week's menu. Print enough copies for each kid in advance. The kids don't have to do all of them — pick what fits the group's energy and what time you have left.

The menu for this week:

- **The Donkey and the Angel** — coloring page of the famous scene on the road, with the memory verse.
- **Words That Stand** — word search with names and key words from the Balaam story (includes a sneak peek of next week).
- **A Promise I Can Trust** — drawing prompt where the kids draw one promise from God they want to remember.
- **Remember the Story** — fill-in-the-blanks recall using the kids' Bibles.

The full production specs for each activity are in this week's activities file.

**NOTE**

While the kids work, sit with them. Ask one or two what they're working on. Reinforce the bottom line one more time before class ends.

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## What Comes Next Week

The kids will keep walking with God's people toward the Promised Land — and meet what comes next as the wilderness years finally end and the new generation gets ready to cross the river.