Preschool–Grade 6

# Balaam's Donkey

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

**Main point:** Listen to God and speak only His word. When God shows us we are wrong, we own up to it and turn back.
**Bible passage:** Numbers 22:21–35. Read it before class.
**Memory verse:** "And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak." *Numbers 22:35 (KJV)*
**You need:** a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a small object to hide (a pencil or a toy), paper and a pencil for each child, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
**Before class:** write the memory verse on the board. Put the small object somewhere in plain sight, but where it blends in.

## 1. Opening game: Can You See It? (5–10 minutes)

Show the kids an object just like the one you placed, and say a twin is somewhere in the room in plain sight. Kids walk around looking, without touching anything. When they see it, they sit down quietly without telling anyone where it is. Give hints until everyone is sitting. Ask: *Why did some people see it and others walk right past it?* Say: "Today a donkey sees something her rider can't see, until God opens his eyes."

## 2. Bible story: The LORD Opened the Mouth of the Ass (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Numbers 22. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words. The KJV says **ass**, an old word for a donkey.

**Why Balaam was going.** Balak, the king of Moab (Numbers 22:4), sent princes to ask Balaam to come and curse Israel. God told Balaam, "thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed" (22:12). Balaam said he could not go beyond the word of the LORD (22:18).

**On the road. Look up Numbers 22:21–22.** Balaam rose up in the morning, **saddled** his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. God's anger was **kindled** (started burning) because he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the way as an **adversary**, someone standing against him. Balaam rode with his two servants.


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**Three times. Look up Numbers 22:23.** The ass saw the angel standing in the way with his sword drawn, and turned aside into the field. Balaam **smote** her (hit her) to turn her back. Next the angel stood in a path of the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side. The ass **thrust** herself (pushed hard) against the wall and **crushed** Balaam's foot, and he hit her again (22:24–25). Then the angel stood in a narrow place with no way to turn right or left, and the ass fell down under Balaam. Balaam was angry and hit her with a **staff**, a walking stick (22:26–27).

**The ass speaks. Look up Numbers 22:28.** Balaam was so angry that he said he wished he had a sword in his hand (22:29). The ass said, "Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever **wont** to do so unto thee?" **Wont** means used to. Balaam said, "Nay" (22:30).

**Balaam's eyes are opened. Look up Numbers 22:31.** Balaam bowed down and fell flat on his face. The angel asked why he had hit his ass three times, and said, "thy way is **perverse** before me," which means not right (22:32). The ass had turned away three times, and that saved Balaam's life (22:33). **Look up Numbers 22:34.** Balaam said, "I have sinned." He offered to go back home. **Look up Numbers 22:35.** He could go, but he must speak only the word God gave him.

## 3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

**Thinking questions** (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. The donkey could see the angel, but Balaam couldn't (22:23, 22:31). What can keep us from seeing what God is showing us?
2. Balaam got angry, hit the donkey three times, and said she had mocked him (22:29). When something goes wrong, why is it easy to blame someone else?
3. Balaam said, "I have sinned" (22:34). Why is it hard to say "I was wrong"? What happens when we do?
4. God told Balaam to speak "only the word that I shall speak unto thee" (22:35). What would it look like for you to speak only what is true and good this week?
5. God used a donkey to stop Balaam. What does that show about God's power?

**Recall questions**

1. Where did the ass go the first time she turned aside? *(Into the field, Numbers 22:23)*
2. What did Balaam hit her with the third time? *(A staff, 22:27)*
3. Who opened the eyes of Balaam? *(The LORD, 22:31)*

## 4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **thee** means you; **thou shalt speak** means you will say; **the princes of Balak** are the men King Balak sent. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.


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## 5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Balaam said, 'I have sinned.' Every one of us needs to say that to God. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to own up to our sin and turn away from it; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."
*Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.*
**This week:** when you are wrong, say so right away, without blaming anyone else.

## 6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Numbers 22:4: Who was king of the Moabites? *(Balak the son of Zippor)*
2. Numbers 22:21: When did Balaam rise up? *(In the morning)*
3. Numbers 22:22: How many servants were with Balaam? *(Two)*
4. Numbers 22:24: Where did the angel stand the second time? *(In a path of the vineyards, a wall on this side and a wall on that side)*
5. Numbers 22:25: What happened to Balaam's foot? *(It was crushed against the wall)*
6. Numbers 22:31: What did Balaam do when he saw the angel? *(He bowed down his head and fell flat on his face)*

## 7. Prayer

"Dear God, open our eyes to see what You are showing us. Help us listen to You, speak only what is true, and own up when we are wrong. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

**If a child asks why God was angry when God had said go (22:20):** the Bible says God's anger was kindled because he went (22:22) and that Balaam's way was "perverse" (22:32). It doesn't tell us everything that was in Balaam's heart, so we stay with what it says.


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