Preschool–Grade 6

Balaam's Donkey

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Listen to God and speak only His word. When God shows us our sin, we confess it instead of blaming others.
Bible passage: Numbers 22:21–35. Students read it out loud themselves.
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)* and "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." *Proverbs 28:13 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Numbers 22 and 2 Peter 2:15–16. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: Excuse or Own It? (5–10 minutes)

Read each situation. Students call out the excuse someone might give, then what "owning it" would sound like. 1) You forgot your homework. 2) You snapped at your little brother. 3) You broke a friend's game. 4) You were late because you kept playing. Ask: *Why do excuses come out so fast? What does it cost to say "I was wrong"?* Say: "Balaam hit his donkey three times and blamed her before he finally said, 'I have sinned.'"

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Tell the background in your own words: Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites (Numbers 22:4). He sent messengers to Balaam to come and curse Israel (22:5–6). God said, "thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed" (22:12). Balaam said, "I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God" (22:18). When more princes came, God said, "If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do" (22:20).

Read out loud: Numbers 22:21–35. Old words in this passage (the KJV calls the donkey an **ass**):

- **saddled** (22:21): put a saddle on; **kindled** (22:22): started burning
- **adversary** (22:22): an enemy, someone standing against him
- **smote / smitten** (22:23, 22:28): hit; **thrust** (22:25): pushed hard
- **mocked** (22:29): made fun of, made a fool of
- **was I ever wont** (22:30): was I ever used to doing this; **nay**: no
- **withstand** (22:32): stand against; **perverse**: crooked, not right
- **slain** (22:33): killed; **if it displease thee** (22:34): if you don't want me to

Read out loud: 2 Peter 2:15–16. Peter says Balaam "loved the wages of unrighteousness," which means he loved being paid for doing wrong, and that "the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet." **Dumb** here means an animal that cannot speak, and **forbad** means stopped.

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Balaam knew what God had said (22:12, 22:18), yet God's anger was kindled because he went (22:22), and Peter says he "loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:15). How can someone say the right words while their heart wants something else?
2. The ass saw the angel three times before Balaam did (22:23–27). What can blind us to what God is showing us?
3. Balaam hit the ass three times and said she had mocked him (22:29). Why is blaming easier than looking at ourselves?
4. The ass had served Balaam faithfully "ever since I was thine unto this day" (22:30). How should we treat those who serve us, even animals?
5. Balaam said, "I have sinned" (22:34). Compare that with Proverbs 28:13. What is the difference between being sorry we got caught and really confessing?
6. God told Balaam to speak "only the word that I shall speak unto thee" (22:35). Where in your life do you need to speak only what is true and pleasing to God?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **thee** means you; **thou shalt speak** means you will say; **the princes of Balak** are the men King Balak sent. In Proverbs 28:13, **covereth** means hides; **prosper** means do well; **confesseth** means admits it to God; **forsaketh** means leaves it behind.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Numbers 22:35 this week; keep working on Proverbs 28:13 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "The angel said the ass turning aside saved Balaam's life (22:33). Balaam needed to say 'I have sinned,' and so do we. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: '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) We **repent**: we confess our sin and forsake it, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-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 utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, 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.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Is there something God keeps putting "in my way" that I keep pushing past?
2. Is there a sin I have been covering instead of confessing (Proverbs 28:13)?
3. Write a short prayer asking God to open your eyes and help you speak only what pleases Him.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: when you are wrong, say "I was wrong" without an excuse. Before you speak, ask: is this what God would want me to say?

7. Prayer

"Dear God, open our eyes to see what You are showing us. Keep us from loving the wrong things. Help us confess our sins instead of covering them, and speak only what pleases You. Thank You for Your mercy and for making a way to save us through Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks why God was angry when He had said go (22:20): stay with what the Bible says. God's anger was kindled because he went (22:22), the angel said Balaam's way was perverse (22:32), and Peter says Balaam loved the wages of unrighteousness (2 Peter 2:15). God sees the heart. The Bible doesn't tell us more, so we don't add to it.

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