



LESSON 2

BALAAM'S DONKEY

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God's Good Plans Cannot Be Stopped

SCRIPTURE: Numbers 22–23

GOD'S BIG STORY: An enemy king wants a prophet named Balaam to curse God's people, Israel. But God gets Balaam's attention through a talking donkey and reminds him through an angel not to curse Israel, for God's good plans cannot be stopped.

WORD OF WONDER: God is able to do far more than we could ever ask for or imagine. He does everything by his power that is working in us. —Ephesians 3:20

CURIOSITY

BELIEF

FAITH

- Welcome Question: What are some plans you have for your life? What do you want to do when you grow up?
- Curiosity Questions
- Discussion Questions for Younger and Older Kids
- Small Group Prayer Time
- Word of Wonder: Ephesians 3:20
- Word of Wonder Activity
- LARGE GROUP
- Responding in Worship: Our Plans and God's Plans



[Unexpected Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God's Good Plans Cannot Be Stopped

SCRIPTURE: Numbers 22–23

WORD OF WONDER: Ephesians 3:20

One of the best sermons I've ever encountered came in the form of a broken seashell.

I had gone to see the sunrise, but it was cloudy so there wasn't one to see. I was disappointed and decided instead to hunt for seashells. The shoreline was full of shells, but most of them were broken.

Soon a mother with her girls joined me and, oh my, the shrieks of delight! "So many shells, Mommy! They are so beautiful!" These girls didn't care the shells were broken. They saw the beauty in their brokenness.

I felt God say to me, "I love broken shells too." That brief encounter spoke volumes to me about the love of God. It changed me.

I wonder if that's how Balaam in our story felt. Here he was, casting curses for money, when God interrupts his life through a talking donkey and a sword-wielding angel. Could he ever go back to the way things were again?

Read Numbers 22:24–38. The natural statement, "I can only speak the words God puts in my mouth," is pretty telling (Numbers 22:38). I tend to believe Balaam's words indicate more of a life change than a momentary utterance.

In what unexpected way has God spoken to you? What broken thing, familiar item, or everyday moment became life-altering and transformational? How has God used something ordinary—something unexpected—to further His plans in your life? God's good plans cannot be stopped.

—Christina Embree

Nonprofit Ministry Director and Minister of Generational Discipleship
Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Balak, the king of Moab; Balaam, well-known Aramean diviner and prophet; the people of Israel, who have entered Canaan and set up camp near Moab; Balaam's donkey; the angel of the Lord.

WHAT?

Israel has gained a reputation for conquering lands in Canaan, and the Moabite king, Balak, is scared of them. He employs the diviner Balaam to curse them, but the Lord intervenes, and Balaam is only able to bless them.

WHERE?

Israel is camped in the plain of Moab, east of the Jordan River, after their entrance into Canaan. The kingdom of Moab was located east of the Dead Sea in what is now Jordan.

WHEN?

This narrative takes place close to the end of the Israelites, 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, shortly before the death of Moses and before God's people cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

God protected His people from being cursed by Balaam while they wandered in the wilderness. God had promised land to His people, and in 2 Corinthians, Paul reminds us that God's promises are "all 'Yes' because of what Christ has done" (1:20). Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of God's good plans!

Small Group

Spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God's Good Plans Cannot Be Stopped

SCRIPTURE: Numbers 22–23

WORD OF WONDER: Ephesians 3:20

Pre-Service (15–20 min)

RESOURCES: [Coloring Page](#)

Small group leaders should be seated in place in their small groups 20 minutes prior to service time. Have play stations with various board games, activities, or use games from the extra Games Activities Guide to keep children occupied and engaged WITH you. This time is important to build relationships, welcome new kids, and keep structure in the room - you should be an active participant with them!

Learn the kids names, and make sure they all know yours too!

Warmly welcome new friends, and introduce them to your group.

Allow quieter kids who don't engage with the board games to color. Involve them in the curiosity questions.

While kids are playing in their opening activity groups..

Pose the following “I’m curious” questions. Say “I’m curious...” before each question and give kids a chance to think about and answer each one. After each question, consider having kids share their ideas with a neighbor before you call on one or two of them to share with the group.

- **Have you ever heard someone say God spoke to him or her? Tell about it.**
- **If God spoke to you, what do you think He would say?**

Small Group Begins: Welcome Question 2–3 min

SUPPLIES: whiteboard, poster paper, or butcher paper, writing utensils

As kids arrive, invite them to write draw the answer to the Welcome Question:

“ What are some plans you have for your life? What do you want to do when you grow up?” Set out sheets of paper and colored pencils.

Right at your service time, move into Small Group time by sharing your own answers and allowing kids to talk about their answers.

Small Group Discussion: Younger Kids 5–8 min

Invite kids to grab their Bibles, and help them find Numbers 22. Remind kids that the large numbers are chapter numbers, and small numbers are verse numbers. Explain that Numbers records the history of God's people, the Israelites, during their 40 years of wandering in the desert after escaping from Egypt but before entering the land God promised them.

Encourage kids to place their fingers on the large 22 as you read Numbers 22:4b(start at "Balak" - 6; 21-32 aloud.

- In God's big story today, what did King Balak want Balaam to do to Israel?
- What animal did God use to get Balaam's attention? What did the animal do?
- What did the animal see in the road that Balaam couldn't see?
- What did God tell Balaam to do? Do you think it was easy or hard for Balaam to do what God said? Why?
- Why do you think Balaam listened to God instead of the king?
- Why do you think God used a donkey to speak to Balaam? What do you think God could use to speak to us?
- How does it make you feel to know that God's good plans for you cannot be stopped?

"Sometimes we are sad, and things aren't the way we like them. But guess what? Even then, we can remember that all of God's good plans will happen. God is able, more than we can ask or imagine, to make sure His plans can't be stopped. We can trust in God's love and care for us. Let's spend some time talking with God in prayer right now."

Prayer Time: Younger Kids

Invite kids to pray for each other by sharing prayer requests and praises. Remind kids that God has good plans for them, and we can trust that He hears our prayers.

Small Group Discussion: Older Kids 8–12 min

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid)

Invite kids to grab their Bibles and turn to Numbers 22. Remind kids that the large numbers are chapter numbers, and small numbers are verse numbers. Explain that Numbers records the history of God's people, the Israelites, during their 40 years of wandering in the desert after escaping from Egypt but before entering the land God promised them.

Invite 4 volunteers to read Numbers 22:4b(start at "Balak" – 6; 21–32; 23:6–7, 11–12 aloud.

Turn to Page 3 of this guide and help kids understand the context of this passage.

- **God's plans were for Balaam to speak His words about the people of Israel, not to curse them. What did God do to make sure His plans could not be stopped?**
- **God opened Balaam's eyes so he could see what the donkey saw. What did Balaam see?**
- **What message did the angel have for Balaam? How did he respond?**
- **It took courage for Balaam to listen and to obey God instead of the king. When are some times you chose to obey God even when it was hard?**
- **God offered grace to Balaam by letting him have multiple chances to listen to God. How does God show grace to us?**
- **Why do you think God used a donkey to speak to Balaam? What do you think God could use to speak to us?** Consider saying, "I wonder " before each of these questions to show kids that there aren't right and wrong answers. Give kids space and encouragement to use their imaginations.
- **Neither Balaam's plans nor Balak's plans came to be, but God's good plans could not be stopped. What does this tell us about our plans versus God's plans? How does it make you feel to know that God's good plans cannot be stopped?**

"Sometimes we think everything is going wrong. In those times, we can remember that not only will all God's good plans happen, but God is able, more than we can ask or imagine, to make sure His plans can't be stopped. We can trust in God's love and care for us. Let's spend time talking with Him in prayer now."

Prayer Time: Older Kids

Invite kids to pray for each other by sharing prayer requests and praises. Remind kids that God has good plans for them, and we can trust that He hears our prayers.

Older Kids – Notes Page

Complete the Notes Page with kids. Helping them to fill out all of the spaces. This is an important way for parents to see what their kids are learning each way and have meaningful conversations at home!

WORD OF WONDER

God is able to do far more than we could ever ask for or imagine. He does everything by his power that is working in us.

—Ephesians 3:20 (NirV)

Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid)

"Our Word of Wonder for the Unexpected series is Ephesians 3:20. It says, "God is able to do far more than we could ever ask for or imagine. He does everything by His power that is working in us." Just like our story today, God can use anything and everything to make sure His good plans cannot be stopped."

Invite kids to open their Bibles to Ephesians 3:20. Read the Scripture aloud and then invite the kids to read it with you. Encourage them to say the verse as quietly as they can, as loudly as they can, and then say it with their eyes closed.

Talk about these questions:

- **What does our Word of Wonder tell us about God's power?**
- **How does it make you feel to know that God's power is working in us?**

Word of Wonder Activity

SUPPLIES: posterboards or sheets of paper (6), crayons or markers, painter's tape (optional)

Help kids form six groups. If you have more than six small groups, assign the same phrase to multiple groups. If you have fewer than six small groups, combine phrases. A group can be as small as two people!

Give each group a posterboard or sheet of paper and assign each a portion of the verse to write:

NirV Version

- Poster 1 – God is able
- Poster 2 – to do far more
- Poster 3 – than we could ever ask for or imagine.
- Poster 4 – He does everything
- Poster 5 – by his power
- Poster 6 – that is working in us. Ephesians 3:20

If you are short on time, consider having the posterboards or sheets of paper already filled out with the verse portions. Let the kids decorate the posters and come up with their actions. Each group will come up with an action that goes along with the words on their poster. Then, each group will share their words and actions with the whole group. Once each group has shared, have all the kids do all the actions without saying the verse. Then have everyone do the actions while saying the verse. As time allows, invite groups to decorate their posters and display them in order on a wall.

Large Group!

Responding in Worship: Our Plans and God's Plans

SUPPLIES: whiteboard and dry-erase markers (or somewhere else to write responses), pencils (1 per kid), Bible (optional), coloring utensils (optional)

RESOURCES: My Prayer Sheet (1 per kid)

Ahead of time, print a copy of the My Prayer Sheet for each kid.

Gather kids and invite them to sit in a circle around you. **"The Bible talks a lot about our plans and God's plans. Our Wonder Truth today tells us that God's good plans cannot be stopped. Let's say it together: God's good plans cannot be stopped. Sometimes our plans don't work out, but God's plans always do. So, what are some of God's good plans for you? I'm going to read some Bible verses that tell us about God's good plans. When I'm done reading each verse, you get to stand up and tell me what you heard about God's good plans.**

Read the following verses and the background information provided. After each verse, invite kids to stand up and tell what the verse teaches them about God's good plans. Record their answers on the whiteboard or in another place where kids can see them; then invite kids to sit back down.



Name: _____

My Prayer ...

God,

Thank You for the way You love me.
Today I learned that Your good plans
cannot be stopped. I know Your plan
for me includes _____.

Help me to always remember You have
good plans for me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Wonder Ink LESSON 2 MY PRAYER SHEET GRADE 1

Leader Tip: The verses listed in this activity are from the NIV translation. Whether you read them directly from this guide or from a Bible version of your choice, consider opening your Bible to each verse to reinforce for kids that the words come directly from Scripture.

The first verse is from the book of Psalms, and most scholars think King David wrote it. It is a song of praise to help the people of Israel remember their great God.

**"But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever. What he wants to do will last for all time."
—Psalm 33:11**

What do we learn about God's good plans?

The second verse is from the book written by the prophet Jeremiah, who spoke God's words to others. The people of Israel were soon going to be conquered by the nation of Babylon, and the Israelites were scared. Jeremiah spoke these words from God to give them peace.

**"I know the plans I have for you," announces the LORD. "I want you to enjoy success. I do not plan to harm you. I will give you hope for the years to come."
—Jeremiah 29:11**

What do we hear about God’s good plans?

The next verse is from the New Testament in a letter Paul wrote to the Romans. The church in Rome often had difficult things to face, but Paul wanted to let them know God was with them.

“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him. He appointed them to be saved in keeping with his purpose.”

—Romans 8:28

What do we learn from what Paul tells us about God’s good plans in this verse?

Our last verse comes from one of the books of Wisdom. This book is called Proverbs because a proverb is a wise saying, and the verses in this book are exactly that—wise sayings!

“A person may have many plans in their heart. But the LORD’s purpose wins out in the end.”

—Proverbs 19:21

What does this wise saying teach us about God’s good plans?

Once you have read all the verses and recorded the kids’ responses, hand out a copy of the My Prayer Sheet and a pencil to each kid. Read the prayer out loud as they follow along:

God,

Thank You for the way You love me. Today I learned that Your good plans cannot be stopped. I know Your plan for me includes _____. Help me to always remember You have good plans for me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Encourage kids to look at the words on the whiteboard that describe what the Bible says about God’s good plans. Have kids choose their favorite word or phrase from the board and write it in the blank space. Encourage kids to read their prayers quietly to God. When the kids are finished, read the prayer out loud together with all the kids reading their different fill-in-the-blank words at the same time. Finish by shouting out the Wonder Truth together: God’s Good Plans Cannot Be Stopped!

Leader Tip: For Younger Kids. Have volunteers available to help younger kids write on their My Prayer Sheets or encourage younger kids to draw a picture in the blank that represents God’s good plans. Older kids might choose to draw instead of writing as well!