



LESSON 2

BALAAAM'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 can do more than we could ever imagine. —from Ephesians 3:20

CURIOSITY

BELIEF

FAITH

- Puppet Intro and Curiosity Questions
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation
- Worship: Mighty God, You Are With Me
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Prayer and Blessing





INVITATION

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

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WONDER TRUTH: God's Good Plans Cannot Be Stopped

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WORD OF WONDER: From 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 final 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 the Israelites, 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!

LESSON 2 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

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

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Welcome**Slide: Series Welcome Loop****As kids arrive...**

Walk around the room and welcome as many kids as possible by showing excitement that they have joined you. Give high-fives, fist bumps, encourage them to sit on the floor in their spots, and ask questions about their week.

Video: Countdown

Welcome kids to worship time. Introduce yourself by name.

Puppet Intro and Curiosity Questions

Introduce the kids to Tac, the curious cat.

Leader: What's that sound? It sounds like someone is stomping around. *(Have Tac the Cat appear.)*

Leader: It's Tac, the curious cat! Tac, why are you stomping around?

Tac the Cat: Well ... I am not a happy cat today!

Leader: Why are you upset, Tac?

Tac the Cat: Because all my friends are going to the park, but my mom won't let me go.

Leader: Aww, I'm sure your mom has a good reason she doesn't want you to go to the park. Did she say why you couldn't go?

Tac the Cat: Well, yeah, she said I couldn't go because it's going to rain, but I looked outside and it's not raining. It's not fair. All of my friends are going to go play at the park and I can't go!

Leader: I'm sure your mom just wanted to keep you safe ... and dry. I'm sorry you are upset you can't go play with your friends.

Tac the Cat: It's just not fair—wait, what's that sound? Is that rain? It's raining!

Leader: It is raining! I guess your mom knew best!

Tac the Cat: Yeah, I'm glad I didn't go out to play because I'm a cat, and you know cats don't like water! I would have gotten all wet in the rain if I had gone out to play!

Leader: Sometimes we may not understand why our grown-ups tell us we can or can't do something, Tac, but they usually just want to keep us safe!

Tac the Cat: Yeah, I guess my mom had the best plan, and I shouldn't have been mad.

Leader: You know, this reminds me of a story in the Bible where someone was angry at something that happened to him, but then he realized it was for his own good—just like you! Even though he was mad at first, he realized it was all part of God's good plan!

Tac the Cat: That sounds like a good story! Can I come listen to it later? Right now, I'm going to look for my rain coat, so I don't get wet from the rain!

Leader: Sure! We'll see you later, Tac!

"Have you ever been curious about something? Let's take a moment and think: Have you ever been upset because your mom or dad said you couldn't do something?" Allow the kids to respond. **Have you ever had plans to do something that you then weren't able to do?** Allow the kids to respond. **We all see and hear things that make us curious. Did you ever stop to think about how God's good plans cannot be stopped?**

SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

Today's Wonder Truth is **GOD'S GOOD PLANS CANNOT BE STOPPED**. Today, we'll discover a story in the Bible when someone finds out that God's good plans cannot be stopped."

Declaring God's Wonder

SLIDE: DECLARATION

Encourage the kids to say the statements and do the motions with you.

"Let's say these words together."

Thank You, God, that You made me! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Make prayer hands, then point up to God and to yourself.

And I am Your kid! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands on your hips.

Jesus loves me so much; (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Spread your arms out wide to your side one at a time, then pull them in for a hug around your chest.

His love for me is big. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your arms up high and wide above your head.

The Holy Spirit leads me, (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Bring your arms down from the sky, making a path in front of you.

And I can follow You. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

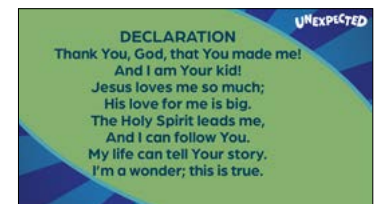
March like you're following the leader.

My life can tell Your story. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your hands in front of you like an open book.

I'm a wonder; this is true. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands up, shaking your fingers, celebrating ("praise hands").



Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation, using your own words. Here is an example: **God, thank You for being with us. Please help us hear from You today. Open our ears and our minds so we can hear what You have to say to us today. Help us learn that Your good plans cannot be stopped. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Worship

"Today, we'll learn how God's good plans cannot be stopped. Let's sing about God's good plans together!"

WORSHIP VIDEO: Mighty God, You Are With Me

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bible

Hold up a Bible and show the kids. Tell them today's story comes from the book of Numbers in the Bible. Open a Bible and show them where the story is found.

Bible Time Rhyme

Say the Bible time rhyme (with motions) each week before the Bible story to remind kids that what they're about to hear is part of God's big story.

I open my Bible and what do I see? ((Hold your hands together, then open your palms, as if opening a book.)

God's big story, waiting for me! (Point to yourself.)

"Let's watch part of God's big story, which comes from the book of Numbers in the Old Testament in the Bible."

VIDEO: GODS BIG STORY

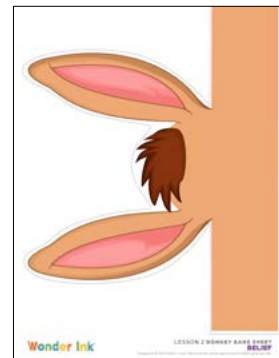
GOD'S BIG STORY SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: Bible, tape, scissors (prep only)

RESOURCES: Donkey Ears Sheet (1 per kid)

Ahead of time, let small group leaders know to bring their donkey ears to Large Group.

"In today's story, we're going to hear about a donkey. You can help with the story by pretending to be the donkey! Hand out donkey ears to each kid and have kids put them on. Every time you hear the word donkey you can say "Hee-haw" like a donkey! Let's practice. "Donkey!" Encourage kids to say, "Hee-haw." Great job! Let's listen carefully to our story.



God's people, the Israelites, had been on a long trip and they decided to camp in the land of a king named Balak. The king was worried because had heard stories of their powerful God who protected them.

Balak came up with a plan. He sent some men to ask a prophet named Balaam to put a curse on the Israelites. Balaam told the men to spend the night while he asked God what he should do. At first, God told Balaam not to go with them. But when they came back and asked him again, God allowed Balaam to go, but God warned him to only do what God told him to do and say. Riding his donkey (pause for kids to say, "Hee-haw"), Balaam set off to see the king. However, God was angry as Balaam left. We don't know why, but we do know God cared about His people, the Israelites, as well as Balaam, and He decided Balaam needed a reminder not to curse the Israelites. So God sent an angel to block Balaam's path.

Balaam couldn't see the angel, but his donkey (pause for kids to say, "Hee-haw") could! Balaam's donkey (pause for kids to say, "Hee-haw") kept swerving to avoid the angel. Eventually, the donkey (pause for kids to say, "Hee-haw") refused to move. Balaam got upset with his donkey (pause for kids to say, "Hee-haw"). Suddenly, the donkey (pause for kids to say, "Hee-haw") opened its mouth and started talking! But this time he didn't say, "Hee-haw!" Repeat what he said after me. He said, "What have I done to you?" Encourage kids to say, "What have I done to you?" He also said, "Why are you upset with me?" Encourage kids to say, "Why are you upset with me?"

You might think Balaam was too surprised to respond, but he talked back to the donkey (pause for kids to say, "Hee-haw")! Then God let Balaam see the angel. The angel reminded Balaam not to curse God's people but only to speak the words that God would give him. When Balaam got to King Balak, he told the king four different times, "I cannot curse these people. I can only bless them because that is what God is telling me to do."

Even when we can't see God or understand His plans, He always keeps His promises. Sometimes, God may use unusual ways to guide us, and He may do things we don't fully understand, but His faithfulness and care for us go beyond our wildest imaginations. God's good plans cannot be stopped.

Connecting the Wonder Truth

Ask the following question to kids to help them connect the Wonder Truth to God's big story:

SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

"Our Wonder Truth today is **GOD'S GOOD PLANS CANNOT BE STOPPED**. Where did you see our Wonder Truth in the story? Allow kids to answer freely.

God protected His people from being cursed by Balaam while they wandered in the wilderness. God cared for His people, the Israelites, and God cares for us! God's good plans cannot be stopped. His greatest plan was sending His Son, Jesus, to save us!"

Prayer and Blessing

Pray with the kids, thanking God for His good plans and promises.

"Let's talk to God. God, thank You for keeping Your promises. Thank You for always having a good plan for us. Help us remember that Your good plans cannot be stopped. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands were open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them. Speak a blessing using your own words. Here is an example:

Blessing: May you always remember that God's good plans cannot be stopped. God wants the best for you and will always love you and take care of you. May you remember that even when you don't understand why something is happening, God is there with you.