



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

- Play Stations:
 - Donkey Face
 - Balaam's Donkey Coloring Sheet
 - Curiosity Activity: Complete the Puzzle
- Word of Wonder: From Ephesians 3:20
- God's Big Story / Snack
- Circle Time: Don't Wake the Donkey!
- LARGE GROUP
- Responding in Worship: Breath Prayers
- Closing Game: Freeze Dance



[Unexpected Preschool Spotify playlist](#)



LESSON 2 FOR LEADERS

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: 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

SCRIPTURE: Numbers 22–23

WORD OF WONDER: From Ephesians 3:20

Play Stations

SUPPLIES: stickers, scissors (prep only), clear tape, brown construction paper - cut into strips coloring utensils

RESOURCES: Donkey Ears Sheet (1 per kid) Balaam's Donkey Coloring Sheet (1 per kid)

Greet kids warmly as they arrive and briefly explain the play stations. Invite them to play at any of the play stations.

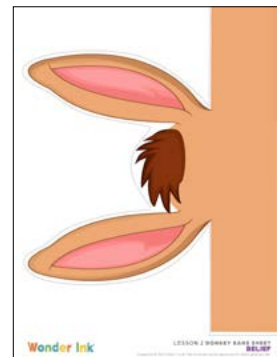
"Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas of what we'll be learning about today?"

Play Station: Donkey Ears

**** Will use these in Large Group, make sure every kid makes one!!**

Set-up: Ahead of time, print a copy of the Donkey Ears Sheet. Cut out the pictures so there is one for each kid. Cut strips of construction paper to extend the headbands as needed. Tape it together to fit each child's head.

Play: Allow kids to attach the different face pieces onto the donkey face using the magnets.



Play Station: Balaam's Donkey Coloring Sheet

Set-up: Print one copy per kid of the Coloring Sheet. Set out the Coloring Sheets and coloring utensils.

Play: Let the kids color. The kids can also turn the sheet over and draw a picture of a donkey.

Curiosity Activity: Complete the Puzzle

SUPPLIES: simple puzzle with a solid back, small bag

Pick a simple puzzle to use with an image of something easily identifiable for kids, such as a dog, cat, boat, etc. Before kids arrive, take apart a simple puzzle and put all the pieces except one in a bag. Set the back of the puzzle nearby. Take the last piece of the puzzle (a middle piece) and hide it somewhere in your room. When you are ready to start the activity, have kids sit nearby and place the back of the puzzle in front of them.

"Who likes to do puzzles? Would you help me put together this puzzle? Allow the kids to respond. Great! I have a bag of puzzle pieces here that go with our puzzle. Each of you can pick a piece out of my bag.

Have each kid pick a puzzle piece or two out of your bag (depending on how many kids you have—make sure you use all of the pieces in the bag).

When we work on a puzzle, we like to have a plan! I like to put in all the edge pieces first. We can tell a piece is an edge piece because it will have one or two straight edges with no bumps. Look at your puzzle piece(s) and see if you have an edge piece. If you think you have an edge piece, hold it up. Let's put the edge pieces in our puzzle first. Call up kids with edge pieces and help them place the pieces in the right spots on the puzzle back. Keep in mind that preschool-appropriate puzzles may not have straight edges on the outer pieces.

Great job! Next, I like to see if I can find something I recognize on puzzle pieces. This puzzle we are doing has a dog on it (or name the image your puzzle shows). If you think your puzzle piece has part of the dog on it (or whatever image your puzzle shows), hold it up. Great! Let's add those pieces to our puzzle next. Continue giving kids clues for pieces until the puzzle is almost complete.

We had a great plan to put together our puzzle, but something is wrong! What's wrong with our puzzle? (The kids should answer that there is a piece missing!) A piece is missing, and now we can't complete our puzzle. You know, this puzzle is like our lives sometimes. We have a plan, but things don't always go according to our plans. The good news is that God has a plan for all of us and His good plans cannot be stopped! Let's see if we can find the last piece of the puzzle. Can you help me look around the room for it?" Let kids look for the piece. After they find it, add the last piece to the puzzle and remind the kids that God's good plans cannot be stopped!

Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: Bible, blocks (at least 10)

"In our story today, we heard about a unique and interesting way that God spoke to Balaam! God may not speak to us through donkeys like He did for Balaam, but the greatest way God speaks to us is through His Word, the Bible. We can know what God is like and understand His words by hearing and learning verses from the Bible. Let's learn one together for this month's Word of Wonder. It's from the book of Ephesians, which is a letter in the New Testament. What does this verse tell us about what God is like?" Allow the kids to respond.

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

WORD OF WONDER

God can do more than we could ever imagine.

—from Ephesians 3:20

- **GOD**—Point up.
- **CAN DO MORE THAN**—Spread your arms wide.
- **WE COULD EVER IMAGINE**—Point to your head.
- **FROM EPHESIANS 3:20**—Hold your hands together in front, then open your palms, as if opening a book.

Let's play a game as we practice our Word of Wonder! Let's see how high we can build our tower as we say our verse! Show the container of blocks and give each child a block. If you have fewer than 10 kids, give some kids more than one block. **We're going to see how high we can make a tower.**

Arrange the kids in a line so they know what order to go in when stacking blocks. Help the kids say the verse and encourage each kid at the front of the line to add a block on top of the tower with each word the group says. After that kid stacks a block, another kid will stack a block for the next word, and so on. When the group says, "Ephesians 3:20," the person at the front of the line gets to knock the tower down. Repeat as time allows.

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **How high do you think we could build our tower? How high do you think God could build a tower?**
- **Is there anything that God can't do? How do you know?**

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

Read pages 94–99 in the My First Hands On Bible.

****Note to leaders:** In this story, Balaam hits his donkey several times. Be aware that extra conversation about this might be needed with some kids who could be sensitive to this.

Circle Time: Don't Wake the Donkey!

SUPPLIES: stuffed donkey (or other stuffed animal if a donkey is not available), bell (or any item that makes noise when moved)

Gather kids in a circle and place a stuffed donkey (or other animal) in the middle of the circle. If using another animal, tell the kids you are going to pretend the animal is a donkey.

"We're going to play a game called "Don't Wake the Donkey!" Our donkey friend is asleep here in the middle of the circle. We are going to pass this bell (or other noisemaker) around the circle. If it makes any sound at all, it will wake up the donkey! The person who wakes up the donkey will get to answer a question.

Hand the first child the bell (or other noisemaker) and encourage them to quietly pass it around the circle. If someone makes the bell ring, have the donkey ask them one of the discussion questions below. After the question is asked, have the donkey go back to sleep in the middle of the circle and have the kids continue passing the bell around the circle.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **What animal did God use to talk to Balaam?** (a donkey)
- **Why did the donkey stop walking?** (An angel was blocking the way.)
- **What did God tell Balaam to do?** (only speak the words that He would give him)
- **Why was Balak worried when God's people were camping nearby?** (He had heard that God was powerful and took care of them.)
- **How does it make you feel knowing God's good plans cannot be stopped?**
- **If you could hear any animal talking, which animal would you want to hear from?**

Sometimes we may not understand why something is happening, but it is good for us to remember that God is faithful and He keeps His promises. God's good plans cannot be stopped. Let's talk to God now in prayer!"

Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises and to pray for each other. Some kids may not be comfortable praying out loud. That's OK! Encourage them to pray silently and to thank God for reminding us that His good plans cannot be stopped.

Head to Large Group!!

Responding in Worship: Breath Prayers

"God can speak in unexpected ways. He even used a donkey to speak in God's big story today! God might not cause a donkey talk to us, but He can talk to us in other ways. He speaks to us and shares His plans for us through the Bible, through other people, through worship, and through prayer. Sometimes it can be hard for us to hear God. Let's do some breath prayers together to help us focus on God. Let's pray some of God's Word together and listen for Him to speak to us.

Everybody take a deep breath in. Now let it out. That's how we do a breath prayer. We think the words of the prayer while breathing in and out. This allows our bodies and minds to focus on God together. I'll say the first part of each breath prayer while you breathe in and then the second part while you breathe out.

- **When I am afraid** (take a deep breath in), **I will trust God** (let your breath out). **Psalm 56:3**
- **God knows the plans** (take a deep breath in) **He has for me** (let your breath out). **Jeremiah 29:11**
- **God loves me so much** (take a deep breath in) **that He gave His only Son for me** (let your breath out). **John 3:16**
- **I can do anything** (takes a deep breath in) **because God gives me strength** (let your breath out). **Philippians 4:13**
- **I can trust in God** (take a deep breath in) **with all my heart** (let your breath out). **Proverbs 3:5**

Let's sit and breathe quietly and listen for God to speak to us today. Guide kids in breathing in and out silently.

When you are scared or afraid or you feel like you don't understand what's happening, you can do these breath prayers and remember that God's good plans cannot be stopped."

Leader Tip: Breath prayers are a great tool for kids to use when they are feeling anxious or afraid. Even if they can't remember a verse to pray, teach them to just say, "Jesus, help me" while inhaling and exhaling.

Closing Activity: Freeze Dance

RESOURCES: songs from the [Unexpected Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#)

"Balaam listened to God's directions after his donkey spoke to him. We can listen to God and remember that His plans can't be stopped. We are going to play a game where you have to listen for directions! I'm going to play some music. When the music plays, you can do your best dance moves, but when the music stops, you should freeze and listen for my next directions.

Play some music from the [Unexpected Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#). After a bit, pause the music and encourage the kids to freeze and listen. Once all the kids are frozen and quiet, give directions for the next round: starting with jumping, then skipping, then tiptoeing.

Great job dancing and freezing and listening for directions! For the next round, instead of dancing, you can jump and skip around."

Turn the music on again and encourage kids to jump. Play several rounds as time allows. You could have kids jump, skip, tiptoe, spin, do jumping jacks, pretend to fly, do toe touches, etc.