

# God Makes a Donkey Talk

Numbers 22:21-41

4

August  
Week 4

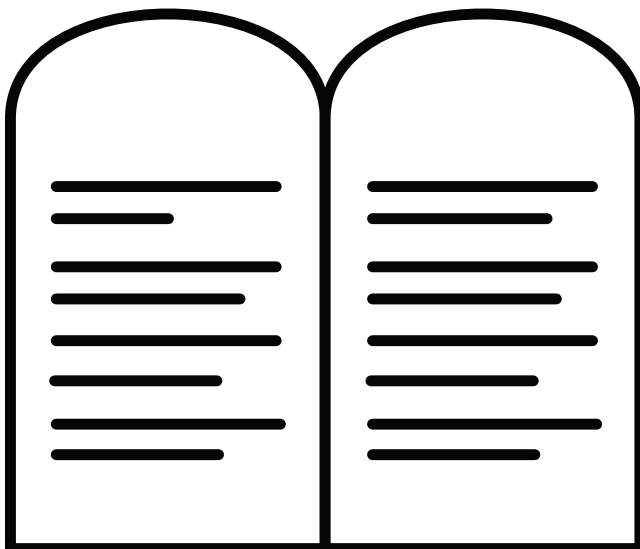
## Teacher Background

**What Happens:** A king asks Balaam to go curse the Israelites. God allows him to go, but only to say God's words. On the way, an angel stands in Balaam's path. Balaam doesn't see the angel, but his donkey does and stops. By the third time his donkey stops, Balaam gets mad at the donkey, and God makes the donkey speak to Balaam. God wanted Balaam's attention.

**Why It Matters:** A lot of things compete for kids' attention. In this digital age, computers, video games, TVs, and phones can all be a constant source of noise and visual stimulation for kids. Invite kids to make time and space for God in their lives. Encourage them not to be like Balaam, ignoring God when he's trying to get their attention.

**Think About:** What gets most of your attention? Eliminate that distraction for a few minutes, and spend time listening to God.

**Pray** that God will disrupt the ordinary in kids' lives to get their attention.



### Point

God wants to get our attention.



### Key Verse

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take."

Proverbs 3:5-6

### QUICK TIP

Transition times can be difficult for kids. When possible, give kids a few minutes' warning when it's time to wrap up an activity. Consistently use the same signal to announce a transition to the next activity, such as blowing a train whistle or clapping in a rhythm. Keep it simple, consistent, and fun. Using a consistent transition signal helps you keep kids' attention as you move to the next activity.

# This Lesson at a Glance



| WHAT HAPPENS                                                                                                    | KIDS DISCOVER                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>CHECK IN</b><br>Connect about the week.                                                                      | The importance of friendships at church.                      |
| <b>SET THE STAGE</b><br>Share about a topic related to the lesson.                                              | The connection between their world and the Bible.             |
| <b>EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE</b><br>Try to get each other's attention.                                               | How God got Balaam's attention.                               |
| <b>PLAY A GAME</b><br>Try to get across the room without bumping into "angels" by listening to their "donkeys." | What might make it hard for us to focus on God.               |
| <b>ACTIVITY PAGES WITH A PURPOSE</b><br>Decode a message.                                                       | How to focus on what God wants to say to us.                  |
| <b>PRAY TOGETHER</b><br>Try to pray with a lot of distractions, which gradually fade away.                      | How to eliminate distractions so we can pay attention to God. |
| <b>EXPLORE MORE</b><br>Explore Isaiah 55:3 and practice listening.                                              | How to stop and listen.                                       |

## EASY SUPPLIES

- o Bible
- o paper towel tubes cut in half (1 per child)
- o wax paper cut into 6x6-inch squares (1 per child)
- o rubber bands (1 per child)
- o "Donkey" handout (1 for every 6 children) (page 169)
- o double-sided tape or Glue Dots
- o "God Makes a Donkey Talk" Activity Page (page 51)
- o pencils
- o worship music
- o media player



## CHECK IN (5 MINUTES)

- Thank kids for coming and have kids thumb wrestle with a friend.
- Make announcements and collect offering.
- Celebrate any birthdays by having kids say “happy birthday” while holding their tongues with two fingers.

**ASK:** Tell one thing that happened this week that made you laugh. Share your own quick story first, and then let everyone share! For groups of more than six, have kids share in pairs so everyone has a turn to talk.



## SET THE STAGE (5 MINUTES)

**SAY:** Today we’re going to learn that ➡ **God wants to get our attention.** In our true Bible story, God got someone’s attention by making an animal talk!

**ASK:** What do you think pets would say if all animals could talk? Share your own quick story first, and then let everyone share!

**SAY:** Animals don’t normally speak in human language. You probably can’t count on getting verbal messages from your pets. But ➡ **God wants to get our attention.** He wanted the attention of a guy named Balaam (BAY-lum) so much that he made a donkey talk! God may not usually talk to us through animals, but he does talk to us through the Bible all the time. Let’s hear what he has to say.



## EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE (10 MINUTES)



### SUPPLIES

- Bible

### GET ATTENTION



Open your Bible to Numbers 22, and show kids the words.

**SAY:** Before I tell you today’s Bible story, I have to give you a little background information.

You see, God’s people were the Israelites. God had blessed the Israelites as they were on their way to their new home. And some of the nearby kings were a little nervous about the Israelites taking over their country.

So this one king tried to hire a guy named Balaam to curse the Israelites—to say he hoped bad things happened to them. But Balaam knew he could only say what God said to say. When he listened, God told him not to go see the king. So he didn’t. But the king kept pressuring him, and finally God said it was OK to go, as long as Balaam did only what God said.

That’s where today’s Bible story picks up. You see, as Balaam was traveling, God wanted to make *sure* he had Balaam’s attention. So he put an angel in the middle of the road.

➡ **God wants to get our attention.** But Balaam didn’t even see the angel! His donkey did and ran off the road into a field. Pat your legs to make running hoof sounds. Pause. The donkey running off made Balaam mad.

Balaam tried to keep going. But the donkey saw the angel again and tried to squeeze around it, which crushed Balaam's foot against a wall. Squeeze your foot. Pause. Balaam got mad when his foot was crushed.

Now, before I tell you what finally got Balaam's attention, I need you to try something. Find a partner. Pause.

The older partners will close their eyes. Younger partners, you'll try to do something that gets your partner's attention and makes them open their eyes. But you can't touch them.

Allow about a minute for kids to attempt to get their partners to open their eyes. Then have partners swap roles.

## CLOSE EYES

**SAY:** Let's all close our eyes now until I tell you to open them. Pause. So Balaam's donkey has seen the angel twice, but Balaam hasn't seen it yet. When Balaam's donkey sees the angel a third time, there's no room to get around the angel. So the donkey just lies down in the road.

As you can imagine, Balaam had had enough of this donkey! But here's where God really got his attention.

 Read Numbers 22:28-30.

**ASK:** What would you do if a donkey or another animal started talking to you? Kids should keep their eyes closed as they discuss.

**SAY:** You might think a talking donkey would get Balaam's attention. But even then, Balaam just had a normal conversation with it! But then...

 Read Numbers 22:31.

**SAY:** You can open your eyes because God finally got Balaam's attention! ➡ **God wants to get our attention.** Finally, Balaam saw the angel. Balaam said if God wanted him to go back home instead of going to the king, that's what he'd do.

The angel said to go to the king, but to make *sure* he said only what God told him to. When Balaam got to the king, he ended up *blessing* Israel three times instead of cursing them. That's because God had definitely gotten his attention on the way there.

## DISCUSS

**SAY:** ➡ **God wants to get our attention,** too. He doesn't always get our attention through angels in the road or talking donkeys. Sometimes he does it in more everyday things, like someone saying exactly what we needed to hear or when we see something beautiful in God's creation.

**ASK:** What's something that has helped you stop and pay attention to God? Have kids share in pairs so everyone has a turn to share. If time allows, ask a couple of kids to share with everyone.

**SAY:** When we stop and pay attention to what God is doing, we call that **God Sightings.** ➡ **God wants to get our attention.** Let's pay attention better than Balaam did as we do an experiment!



## CELEBRATE SMALL

Questions like these are a great way to get to know more about your kids' faith—and because you're a small church, you get to have an intimate discussion and hear from everyone!



### LISTEN FOR THE DONKEY

**SAY:** In the Bible, God wanted to get Balaam's attention, so God sent an angel to block Balaam's way. If Balaam hadn't *finally* listened to his donkey, he could've died! You won't be in quite so much trouble in this game, but you might discover what it was like for Balaam.

- Choose about one out of every three kids to be "Angels." You and other leaders can play to be sure there are at least three players!
- Send Angels to the middle of the room, and send everyone else to one wall.
- Have the rest of the kids form pairs (just one pair is fine!) and then determine which partner is "Balaam" and which is the "Donkey."
- Tell all the Balaams to close their eyes.

**SAY:** In a minute, I'll have the Angels silently scatter around our room and find a spot to stand. Angels, you'll walk slowly back and forth in this game. The rest of you will try to get all the way across the room without running into an Angel.

Donkeys, you'll walk near your Balaam, just behind him. If your Balaam is heading toward an Angel, all you can do is bray like a donkey. The closer your partner gets, the louder you can bray to warn your Balaam.

Balaams, you can move forward, right, or left to avoid an Angel, but you can't move backward. If you do bump into an Angel, you need to start over. And no peeking! Ready?

Begin the game. If you'd like, play music as kids play. After everyone has made it across the room, play again and have kids switch roles. Play three rounds so everyone has a turn being Balaam.

### TALK ABOUT IT

Gather kids in a circle.

**ASK:** When you were a Donkey, what made it hard to get Balaam's attention?

**ASK:** Do you think God ever has trouble getting your attention? Why or why not?

**SAY:** God has important things for you to do, and he wants to guide you in the right way. That's why ➡ **God wants to get your attention.**

### SUPPLIES

- upbeat music (optional)
- music player (optional)

### QUICK TIP

If your group skews younger, reiterate the rules a few times, making sure kids really know what they are supposed to do in their role.



## ACTIVITY PAGES WITH A PURPOSE (10 MINUTES)



### SUPPLIES

- “God Makes a Donkey Talk” Activity Page (1 per child) (page 51)
- “God Makes a Donkey Talk” Coloring Page (1 per younger child) (page 52)
- pencils
- crayons

### QUICK TIP

For younger kids, provide the Coloring Page and crayons as an alternative.

**SAY:** Sometimes, like Balaam, we’re not listening very well. Or God’s messages to us can feel like a code. Let’s see if you can decode this message.

Distribute the activity pages and pencils. Kids will use the key to translate the message. It may be helpful for kids to work in pairs to solve this puzzle.

**ASK:** What are some ways God has gotten your attention?

**SAY:** Sometimes God gets our attention in big, obvious ways...like a talking donkey! Other times we need to pay a little more attention to tune in to what he’s saying. It might even feel like we have to decode what he’s trying to tell us. However he does it, ➡ **God wants to get our attention.**

ANSWER KEY: PAY ATTENTION! DON’T TUNE OUT WHEN I TELL YOU TO DO SOMETHING. WATCH WHAT I AM DOING IN YOUR LIFE!



## PRAY TOGETHER (5 MINUTES)



### SUPPLIES

- upbeat music
- music player
- noisemaker

### PRAY WITH DISTRACTIONS

**SAY:** Sometimes our lives are full of distractions, and it’s harder to pay attention to God. Let’s try to pray with a lot of distractions. Silently talk to God about taking away the things that distract you from giving him your attention.

As kids begin to pray, play loud music, stomp your feet, blow into a noisemaker, or do other things that will cause distractions in the room. One at a time, eliminate the distractions until the room is silent. Turn off the lights to reduce visual distractions as well.



### PRAY SILENTLY

**SAY:** ➡ **God wants to get our attention.** Now that our distractions are gone, spend time listening to God.

Allow a minute or so for listening.

### CLOSE

**PRAY:** God, thank you for getting our attention. Help us pay attention to you, and help us see you when you’re trying to get our attention. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Thank kids for coming, and encourage them to come back next week.



## LISTEN UP!

**SAY:** ➡ **God wants to get our attention.** He wants us to know how much he loves us. When we're distracted by other things, sometimes we miss what God wants to show us or tell us. We can be as blind as Balaam was when he didn't see an angel standing in front of him!

Let's practice paying attention right now and see what we might be missing here in this room. We'll have a moment where we stop making any noise and listen to what sounds we can hear.

- Have kids find a comfortable spot and sit quietly, just listening. They may even close their eyes to help them focus. Encourage them to listen for sounds they may not have noticed before. (Make sure you're listening, too!)
- After about a minute, ask kids to share what sounds they heard. If kids have trouble getting started, share some things you heard, such as people out in the hallway, the ventilation system kicking on, or cars driving by.
- Spend another minute or so listening, and then ask the question again, allowing more kids to share what they heard.



### QUICK TIP

It may take a little bit for kids to quiet down and listen, especially if your group skews younger. Allow the time it takes so kids can really listen.

## EXPLORE ISAIAH 55:3

**SAY:** You might never have noticed some of those sounds because you weren't paying attention. And sometimes we don't notice *God* because we're not paying attention. Like Balaam, we might be more focused on what *we're* doing than what God is doing. But ➡ **God wants to get our attention,** too. Let's see what the Bible has to say about that.



Read Isaiah 55:3.

**ASK:** What do you think it means to go to God with your ears wide open?

**ASK:** What can you do to listen to God better?

**SAY:** ➡ **God wants to get our attention** so he can tell us how much he loves us and guide us in what to do. Don't forget to stop and listen! Keep your ears wide open to see what God wants to tell you. God speaks to our hearts through his Son, Jesus. Jesus loves you and wants to talk with you!

# God Makes a Donkey Talk

## Activity Page

God had something to say to Balaam. And God has something to say to you! Decode the message to find out what it says.



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### Donkey



# God Makes a Donkey Talk

Coloring Page



Numbers 22:21-41: Balaam didn't want to do what God said. He could get in trouble with the king! But God sent an angel to get Balaam's attention to make sure he obeyed. When that didn't work, God made Balaam's donkey talk to him! *God wants to get our attention.*