

Old Testament

Balaam and the donkey

Numbers 22-24

Younger Memory Verse We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. Acts 4:20

Older Memory Verse We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. Acts 4:20

Teachers: This new unit is designed to help your children understand some of the stories in the Old Testament. Each lesson will have both Old Testament and New Testament passages.

PLEASE remember to always include the New Testament verses—this helps each child see how God's ultimate plan was fulfilled in Christ!

Welcome Time

Have you ever read or seen something really strange and wondered if it was true? In today's lesson from the Bible, something totally amazing happens.

Bible Story

*Please note: This portion of the lesson is given to help in teaching the lesson. Please read through the story and read it in the Bible. Do **NOT** read from this piece of paper. Instead, make a note sheet and place it next to the story in the Bible.*

Teachers: Be sure that you make it clear that Balaam only appeared to follow God. He knew of God in his head, but did not know God in his heart.

Remember we have been learning about God's people and how they have been traveling in the desert. Last week we saw how they did not listen to God and it caused them to stay in the desert for 40 more years!

All the kingdoms in the area were terrified of God's people. They saw how the people could destroy them and they were scared.

There was a man named Balaam who lived in their town. He was like Moses in that he would talk to God and ask for help. Important people would come to him for help. There was just ONE big difference between Moses and Balaam. Moses loved God and loved Him with all his heart. Moses told the people what God said because he obeyed God and wanted the people to listen and obey.

Balaam helped people if he received money to do it. He did not know God personally in his heart. He only knew God in his head.

One day the king of the land sent special messengers to Balaam to ask for help. He wanted Balaam to ask God to curse His own people. This sounds strange to us. Why would anyone think that they could get God to curse the people that He loved and helped?

Balaam asked God what to do and God told him not to go with the men.

When the king heard the answer, he sent other more distinguished princes to ask Balaam to help them. He also made sure that Balaam knew that he would be given much money if he came and cursed God's people.

Lesson Goals

Know the difference between knowing God in your head and knowing God in your heart
Share examples of how money can cause people to sin and do wrong things
Think about our motives and actions

Balaam asked God what to do. God told him to go, but only to speak what He said.

Early the next morning, Balaam saddled his donkey and rode with the princes back to the king's palace.

Even though Balaam seemed to be following God, God knew that he had other plans in his heart. God knew the greed for money and things that was in Balaam's heart.

An angel of the Lord stood in the road with a sword. Balaam could not see the angel, but the donkey could. When the donkey saw the angel, she turned off the road into a field. Balaam could not believe what his donkey was doing. He beat the donkey for going off the path.

Again the angel stood near a narrow path with walls on each side. When the donkey saw the angel again, she pressed close to the wall and crushed Balaam's foot. Again Balaam beat the donkey.

For a third time, the angel stood near a narrow place with no room to go around. This time the donkey sat down. Balaam was furious with the donkey and beat her again.

Suddenly, God made the donkey talk. That's right! The donkey started talking. She asked Balaam why he beat her three times.

Balaam answered that the donkey had made a fool out of him in front of the special princes. He was embarrassed.

Then, God opened Balaam's eyes to see the angel with the sword. The angel explained that the donkey had saved his life three times.

Balaam fell to his knees and asked forgiveness. He knew that God knew his greedy heart and the sin that was inside. He asked God to forgive him.

God forgave Balaam but warned him only to speak what God tells him to say.

Balaam kept his promise and said only what God wanted. Four times he spoke to the king and told him that God's people would be blessed and eventually would rule the kingdom.

Balaam listened and obeyed God when it profited him. He knew that the king would pay him no matter what he said. He thought more about the money than about the people.

Balaam may have looked like a follower of God on the outside, but inside, he really was doing whatever got money and fame. Balaam might have fooled many people, but he did not fool God.

We may fool others and they may think that we believe in Jesus and know Him. Inside, God knows our hearts. He knows if we REALLY trust Him or just say we do in front of others. God sees us wherever we are and knows if we act one way in church and another way at home or at school.

Do you know God in your heart or do you just know Him in your head. Have you been playing a game pretending to be a Christian, when you really are not?

God wants us to trust in Him and believe in Him with all our hearts. We must believe in Him because we love Him and know that He loves us and sent His only Son, Jesus, to make a way for us to get to Heaven. If you want to know more about loving God and believing in Him, talk to us about it.

Learning Activities

There are some great lessons in today's story. Talk about them with the kids. See what they can learn from this story.

Memory Verse Activities

In today's lesson, the donkey had to speak and tell the truth. How can you tell someone about Jesus? Take time to think of some ways to share with others.

Prayer Time

Ask God to help us have right attitudes this week. Ask Him to help us live what we believe—especially as school is about to start!

Snack Time/CleanUp

Donkeys eat corn. Bring corn nuts to munch on as you act out the story!

Planning for Lesson 33
Rahab and the spies
Joshua 2

Preschool Lesson
For
Balaam and the donkey

Teachers: Use a donkey sack puppet to tell the story today.

Hello boys and girls. My name is Dorothy. I want to tell you an amazing story. So listen very closely.

Many, many years ago, I had a master named Balaam. I worked hard for him and he was good to me. He gave me a nice place to sleep and delicious corn and hay to eat. Balaam rode on my back to travel to different places.

One day, some important people came to our house. After spending two nights with us, Balaam saddled me and we rode out of town with them.

Suddenly as we were clippity clopping along, I couldn't believe my eyes. There was a beautiful angel in the middle of the road. The angel was mad. He had a big sword in his hands and I knew that he was going to hurt my master, Balaam.

So, I got off the road and went into the field. My master did not see the angel and became very upset with me. He beat me. It hurt and I was sad, but I knew that I had helped Balaam.

A second time as we were traveling, the angel stood close to a wall. To get around the angel, I traveled near the wall and accidentally crushed Balaam's foot. It hurt and he cried out in pain. Then, he beat me again. In my heart, I wished that I could talk to tell him what I was doing.

Then a third time, an angel stood ready to hurt Balaam. There was no way around the angel, so I just sat down in the road. Balaam was so angry. He beat me again.

That is when something amazing happened. God allowed me to talk. That's right. I could talk!! Donkeys do not normally talk, but I could! I asked Balaam why he had beat me 3 times. I reminded him that I was a good donkey and tried always to obey him.

Then, God opened his eyes to see the angel. When he saw how I had protected him, he was so sorry. He also told God he was sorry. You see, God knew that Balaam was traveling to do something wrong. He told Balaam that he must speak only what God said. Balaam listened and obeyed God.

When the people asked him to do a mean thing, Balaam told the people that he could only do what God wanted.

We must listen and obey God. He wants us to love each other and do things that are right.

Pray and ask God to help us do good to others this week.

Hands-On Activities For Balaam and the Donkey

Make a cartoon strip of the story today.

Use Play dough to sculpt a donkey.

Balaam loved money. God knew that his heart was not clean. He was thinking of ways to get more money and be greedy instead of helping the people know God. The Bible tells us that we cannot love money and God. Share how God will provide for all our needs if we trust in Him.

Try this object lesson to help the kids see that God can make hidden sins come to the surface. Mix 1/2 cup salt with 3/4 cup hot water in a glass. Drop a grape into the mixture. It should float. (if it doesn't, add more salt and mix.) Take the grape out and let the water cool and bring to class. Before you share the object lesson, add 1/2 cup water to the glass. Very carefully pour it into the glass so that you do NOT mix the salt water and the fresh water. Drop the grape into the water and notice how it stays in the middle of the glass (where the salt water is). Share how some people have sins that are in their hearts. We cannot see them, but God can. Now stir up the mixture with a spoon. Suddenly the grape will float to the surface. Share how God knows our hearts and brings our sins to the surface so that we can learn a lesson and tell Him we are sorry for our wrongs and ask for forgiveness.

Before class, make a cake or cookies, but do not add the sugar to the recipe. The cake or cookies will look good on the outside, but taste bad on the inside. Ask the kids to eat (and probably spit out) the treats. Share how sometimes people look good on the outside, but inside their hearts are dirty. Share how God knows our hearts and wants us to have clean hearts.

Remember that Balaam was not a believer. He knew who God was in his head, but he never trusted in Him in his heart. When a person becomes a Christian, he trusts in God and believes in Jesus because he knows that Jesus died for all the wrong things that he has done. He tells God that he is truly sorry for all the wrong things he has done and asks God to clean out all the bad stuff in his heart. Then he asks Jesus to come into his heart and live there forever. God hears a prayer that is true and real.

Sometimes people may think they are a Christian if they believe and know God in their head. They know who He is, but they have never believed in their heart. God cannot be a friend if you have never met him or asked Him into your heart. What about you? Is God your friend or someone you hear about every Sunday? Think about it. (Teachers, this may be a great opportunity to see some children really think about their relationship and where they stand. Be sensitive to needs, making sure that no one makes a decision just because others did.)

