



Balaam's Donkey Talks

Numbers 22:1-38

Third- and fourth-graders are willing to accept things that are said to them by authority figures. The account of Balaam's donkey is a strange one as it comes very close to some fairy tales they're used to hearing and seeing, and it may seem fictional as those stories are. It's important for kids this age to make a connection to the things God is doing as real and applicable to their lives. If kids this age can learn to pay attention to God, they'll also learn to discern his truth. Use this lesson to help kids pay attention to God in all areas of their lives.



► Bible Point


Pay attention to God.

Key Verse

"Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in man's behalf!" (Psalm 66:5).


Weaving Faith Into Life

Kids will pay attention to God in all things.

LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
1 Getting Started	That's Amazing! <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Interview one another about amazing things.	paper, pencils, stopwatch	
2 Bible Exploration	Donkey Tales <i>(about 35 min.)</i> Make large paper-bag donkeys and play a game to help tell the Bible passage.	Bibles, Bible Truth Sleuth, scissors (several pairs), a supply of newspapers, packing tape, tape, markers, 2 brown paper grocery bags and 2 brown lunch bags per child, 1 small paper bag per 2 children (optional), copies of the "Donkey Hooves" handout (at the end of this lesson) (optional), yarn (optional), hole punch (optional) Teacher Pack: Bible Timeline, "Balaam's Visitors" cards 	Tear out the Lesson 9 pages from each Bible Truth Sleuth student book. Separate the "Balaam's Visitors" cards.
	Say What? <i>(about 5 min.)</i> Continue the journey, and learn that Balaam's donkey spoke.	CD player, donkeys from the "Donkey Tales" activity Teacher Pack: CD	

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.





LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
3 Weaving Faith Into Life	Come and See! <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Share amazing things that God has done in their lives.	Bibles, Bible Truth Sleuth, pens	
4 Lasting Impressions	Daily Challenges <i>(about 5 min.)</i> Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God's Word.	Bible Truth Sleuth	
	Weaving Faith at Home <i>(about 2 min.)</i> Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.		

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.





Balaam's Donkey Talks

Numbers 22:1-38

BIBLE BACKGROUND
FOR LEADERS



The Fortuneteller

.....

This event takes place near the end of the Israelites' time of wandering in the desert. They had defeated a few adversaries in their travels and were approaching the Promised Land again. The leader of Moab was afraid of what Israel might do to his land, so he sought the help of Balaam.

Apparently Balaam was a widely known fortuneteller, or diviner, who made his living through his divination. He probably believed in many gods and would consult anyone, including the Lord, who could help him earn his fees.

A Wrong Motive

.....

Even though Balaam called upon the Lord and spoke God's words to the people sent by Balak, Balaam's underlying motive was for selfish gain.

When God had told Balaam "no" the first time, Balaam should have taken that as a final answer. But when Balaam came back to God a second time, it was clear that Balaam's desire for financial gain was greater than his desire to do what God told him. In letting Balaam go but not letting him do anything that would please Balak, God was showing how he disliked Balaam's money-hungry attitude.

God let Balaam go with Balak's men, but God was angry because he knew that Balaam was acting from self-interest and greed.

A Talking Donkey?

.....

Not being able to see the angel his donkey saw must have been a huge insult to Balaam, who prided himself on knowing and seeing spiritual things. Certainly Balaam was humiliated when the donkey had to speak in order to get him to see reality. Balaam

had been blinded by his desire for riches. God finally opened his eyes to the angel standing in the path and to the evil of what Balaam had been doing.

Speaking God's Words

.....

After getting Balaam's attention through the donkey and the angel, God let Balaam know that he wanted Balaam to go through with his trip but to speak only what God said. This whole event was intended to help Balaam think clearly and to know that he had to do what God told him.

The Jesus Connection

.....

God is always doing things in us and through us, but we can sometimes forget that and stop paying attention to him. When we let our focus stay on God, we can be used more easily by him. Write the most recent thing you can remember that helped you see God at work. Ask God to help you pay attention to him in the big and small things in your life. You can write your prayer on the lines below.





That's Amazing! Supplies

paper
pencils
stopwatch

Donkey Tales Supplies

Bibles
Bible Truth Sleuth
scissors (several pairs)
a supply of newspapers
packing tape
tape
markers
2 brown paper grocery
bags and 2 brown
lunch bags per child
1 small paper bag per 2
children (optional)
copies of the "Donkey
Hooves" handout (at
the end of this lesson)
(optional)
yarn (optional)
hole punch (optional)
Teacher Pack
Bible Timeline
"Balaam's Visitors" cards

Donkey Tales Easy Prep

Tear out the Lesson 9
pages from each Bible
Truth Sleuth student
book.

Separate the "Balaam's
Visitors" cards.

1 GETTING STARTED

That's Amazing!

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Welcome kids warmly as they arrive, and ask them how their week went.

Have kids form two groups. One group will be "Reporters" and the other group will be the "Crowd." Give the Reporters a supply of paper and pencils. Say: **When I give the starting signal, the Reporters will have two minutes to interview as many Crowd members as possible. Reporters, the only questions you can ask in each interview are "What's the most amazing thing you've ever seen?" and "Why did you pay attention to that thing?"**

Reporters will write down each response and then move on to interview someone else. If a Reporter receives a duplicate response, he or she must ask the Crowd member for a new response. Give the starting signal, and let Reporters interview for two minutes. Then call time, and let groups change roles. Play for another two minutes, and then gather kids in a circle.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What's the most amazing thing you heard about?**
- **Explain why you paid more attention to that thing.**

Say: **God does amazing things to show his power. There's nothing too big or too difficult for God to do, and we can ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD so we notice the things he's doing. Today in the Bible we'll meet a man who found out just how amazing God is! Something that seemed impossible happened to help him learn to ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD.**

2 BIBLE EXPLORATION

Donkey Tales

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Point out "Balaam's Donkey Talks" on the Bible Timeline.





Distribute this week's Bible Truth Sleuth pages, and set out the supplies. Say: **Today we'll look at the book of Numbers.** Open your Bible to Numbers 22:1-38, and show kids the passage. **Before we go any further, let's make something. We're going to learn about a man named Balaam and his donkey. Actually, Balaam's donkey plays a pretty important role in what happened, so we'll make donkeys of our own. Here's how.**



Lead kids through the following steps:

1. Loosely stuff one paper grocery bag with newspaper, and then fit another large paper bag over the open end. This will form the body of the donkey. (Since kids will be "riding" their donkeys, make sure they don't stuff the donkeys so fat that they can't straddle them.)
2. Stuff one paper lunch bag with newspaper, and fit another lunch bag over the open end. This will be the donkey's head.
3. Have kids draw faces on their donkeys' heads and then use a loop of packing tape to attach the head to the body.
4. Have kids turn to the "Donkey Ears" section of their Bible Truth Sleuth pages. Have kids cut out the ears and tape the ears to their donkeys' heads.
5. Optional: To make a mane for the donkey, make several loops of yarn and tie it in the middle. Cut both ends of the looped yarn. You can also create a tail by making several larger loops of yarn, tying it in the middle, and cutting both ends. Pinch a corner of the bag and hole punch it where you want to attach the mane and tail, and then tie the yarn to the bags.
6. Optional: Cut a small paper bag into eight strips and have kids cut out the "Donkey Hooves" handout. Help kids tape the hooves to the bottom of four strips from the paper bag, and then tape these to the bottom of the large paper bag to form legs with hooves.





When everyone has finished making a donkey, gather kids in a circle. Say: **As you know, there were no cars in Bible times. Everyone walked or rode an animal. Before we hear from the Bible, let's get used to riding our donkeys.**

Have kids "ride" their donkeys around the room twice. Then have kids form four groups, and number the groups from one to four. Give each group a Bible.

Say: **We'll be riding our donkeys as we hear about Balaam and his donkey. Balaam was trying to ignore what God wanted him to do, but God had a way of making sure he got Balaam's attention. We can ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD all the time.**

At the time that Balaam lived, the Israelites—God's special people—were wandering around in the desert.

Show kids the "Balaam's Visitors" cards. Explain that with each card, kids will read aloud what's written in bold type and then follow the instructions.

Have kids take turns picking a card, making sure to go in sequence. Let the child who picks the card read it and lead everyone in following the directions.

Afterward, read aloud Numbers 22:21-22.

Say: **The Bible doesn't tell us exactly why God was mad at Balaam, but many Bible scholars believe it was because God knew something about Balaam's heart that the Bible doesn't tell us. Later in the Bible, the Apostle Peter wrote that Balaam "loved the wages of wickedness."**

When you hear me mention Balaam, act out what Balaam does. I'll lead you in the actions. Are you ready? Let's go.

Have kids form a line. Stand at the front of the line, carrying your Bible with you, and lead kids around the room as they ride their donkeys. Then abruptly stop, letting kids bump into you. Face the kids, and read aloud Numbers 22:23. Encourage kids to pretend that their donkeys are turning off the road and they're trying to get their donkeys back on the road.

Lead kids around the room again. Stop abruptly, and read aloud Numbers 22:24-25. Encourage kids to pretend that their donkeys are pressing against a wall and hurting the kids' feet. Have kids pretend they're trying to get their donkeys moving.

Then lead kids around the room again. Stop abruptly, and read aloud Numbers 22:26-27. Encourage kids to pretend that their donkeys are lying down in the road. Have kids pretend they're trying to get their donkeys going. Have kids ride into a circle, dismount, and sit down.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.





Ask:

- What do you think of an animal seeing the angel when a human couldn't?
- Tell about a time you didn't do something you were supposed to do because you weren't paying attention.
- What kinds of things distract you from doing what's right and listening to God?
- How can you pay attention to God better than Balaam did?

Say: A donkey seeing an angel in the road is pretty amazing. But wait—this isn't over yet! Balaam was really not paying attention, so God did something Balaam couldn't ignore. We can learn from Balaam's mistake and make sure we ► **PAY ATTENTION TO GOD** all the time. We can read God's Word, listen to people who are wiser than we are, and do what we know is right. Let's find out how God finally got Balaam's attention.

Say What?

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Say: After Balaam's donkey had seen the angel three times, an even more amazing thing happened. Listen with your donkey.

Play "Balaam's Donkey" (track 17 on the CD). Say: **You're going to hear about some pretty amazing things that happened. This donkey did some rather human things. When you hear about the donkey doing something human, treat the donkey you made earlier like a person. When the donkey is doing regular donkey things, treat your donkey like a donkey.** For example, kids might offer their donkeys food at a trough when the donkey isn't speaking, but they might sit their donkey up to eat at a table when the donkey is talking. Allow kids to be creative and give ideas that they think work best.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

When the track has ended, have kids find partners and answer the following questions. After each question, ask pairs to share their insights with the rest of the group.

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- In what ways is it surprising that God used a donkey to talk to Balaam?
- What's one thing you can do to help yourself pay attention when you're feeling distracted?
- Why does it matter whether we pay attention to God or not?

Say: Balaam must've felt pretty important to have the king of Moab begging him to come and messengers knocking on his door all the time. But God wasn't impressed. God used a lowly donkey to cause Balaam to ► **PAY ATTENTION TO GOD**. God went to amazing measures to protect the Israelites and to get Balaam to obey. God doing amazing things to help people is what today's Key Verse is all about.



Say What? Supplies

-
- CD player
 - donkeys from "Donkey Tales" activity
 - Teacher Pack**
 - CD: "Balaam's Donkey" (track 17)





Come and See! Supplies

Bibles
Bible Truth Sleuth
pens

3 WEAVING FAITH INTO LIFE

Come and See!

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Give each pair a Bible, and have partners read the Key Verse, Psalm 66:5. Lead kids in repeating the Key Verse aloud several times: **“Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in man’s behalf!” (Psalm 66:5).**

Say: **When you do something in someone’s behalf, that means you do something for that person—you help that person do something he or she may not have been able to do alone.**

Ask kids to answer this question in their pairs:

- **When has someone done something in *your* behalf?**

Distribute pens. Have kids turn to the “Come and See What God Has Done!” activity on the Bible Truth Sleuth page. Say: **In the left-hand section, list amazing things that God has done on man’s behalf and write down one way you can pay attention to each of those things.**

When kids have finished writing, tell partners to discuss their answers with each other. Then invite willing kids to read their answers to the rest of the group.

Say: **Now in the right-hand section, write about the most amazing things you’ve seen God do in your life or on your behalf and write down how you paid attention to God when each of those things happened.** When kids have finished writing, let partners discuss what they’ve written, first with each other and then with the rest of the group.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **Why is it important to pay attention to the amazing things God has done?**
- **Is it easy or difficult for you to be truly amazed by God? Explain.**
- **How can you show God you’re paying attention to him?**

Say: **It’s helpful for us to pay attention to the amazing things God’s done for us, and it’s also good to share what God’s done with other people. Our stories can encourage other people and help them ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD. God used an amazing thing to help get Balaam’s attention, and he can do the same for us.**





4 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Daily Challenges

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Say: Consider this week how you can ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD.

Have kids find this week's Daily Challenges on their Bible Truth Sleuth pages and choose one to do this week. They can choose one or more of these three options:

- Take a walk, and ask God to help you pay attention to him. Notice all the things around you that help you pay attention to God.
- Draw a picture of something amazing God has done for you or for someone you know. Hang up the picture as a reminder to pay attention to see what other amazing things God will do for you.
- Make your favorite snack with your mom or dad. Don't eat the snack right away. Every time you think about the snack, say a prayer to God. Remember that God wants you to pay attention to him.

Make sure you choose a Daily Challenge as well, and tell the kids what you chose. Kids will be more inclined to follow through on their commitments when they see you doing the same.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- What's a practical way you're going to do your Daily Challenge? Include a time, a place, and other ideas.

Say: God did something extraordinary to get Balaam's attention. We can ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD as we follow through on our Daily Challenges.

Weaving Faith at Home

Encourage kids to talk with their parents about the Daily Challenges they chose and what they learned about paying attention to God. Kids can also do the activities in the "HomeConnect" section of their Bible Truth Sleuth pages with their families.

Talk to your Director about emailing the FREE FamilyConnect to all your church's families. Available at group.com/digital.

Have kids pray in groups of four. Throughout the prayer time, clap your hands randomly to get kids' attention. Remind them to pay attention to God at least as much as they're paying attention to you when you clap.

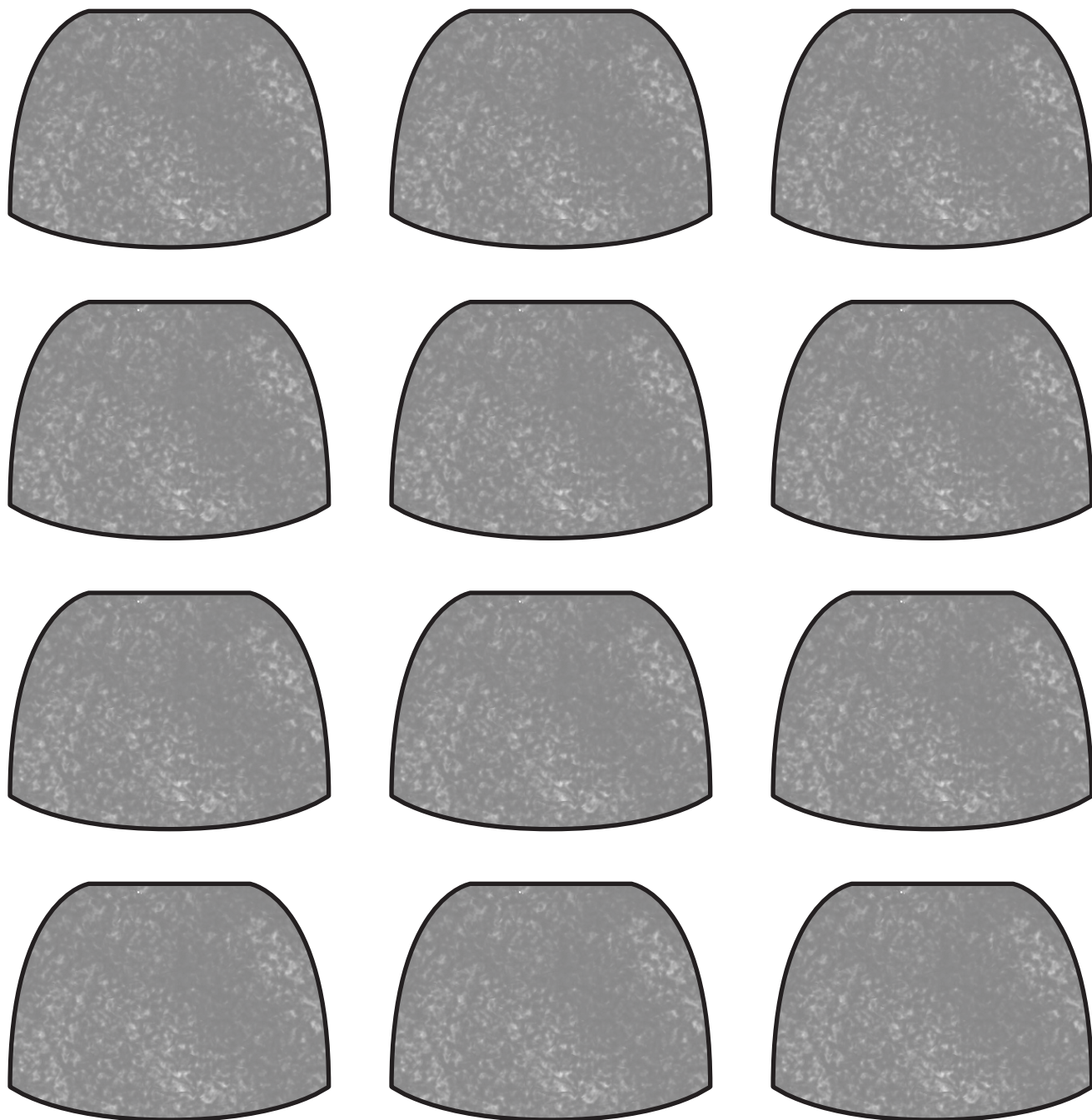


Daily Challenges Supplies

Bible Truth Sleuth



Donkey Hooves



OK
TO COPY

