



Balaam's Donkey Talks

Numbers 22:1-38

Listening is a skill your 5- and 6-year-olds are still learning. Kids this age are learning that there's a world outside themselves. They're becoming increasingly interested in hearing the thoughts and feelings of others as they become aware that others' feelings and thoughts are separate from their own. Use this lesson to help kids recognize the importance of paying attention to God.



► Bible Point



Pay attention to God.

Key Verse

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

Weaving Faith Into Life

Children will pay attention to God in daily life.

LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
1 Getting Started <i>about 5 min.</i>	Welcoming Song Sing or listen to songs to welcome everyone to church.	CD player Teacher Pack: CD	
2 Key Verse Activity <i>about 10 min.</i>	God Is With Us Play a game of pretend to learn about the Key Verse.	Bible	
3 Bible Exploration <i>about 20 min.</i>	Theo's News Find out what a "Balaam's Donkey" poster has to do with the Bible.	Surprise Box (any box will do), Theo puppet, CD player Teacher Pack: CD, "Balaam's Donkey" poster 	Place the poster in the Surprise Box, and hide the box where it's easily accessible.
	Bible Time: A Talking Donkey Act out the events in the passage as they're told.	Bible, tape Teacher Pack: "Balaam's Donkey" poster, "Balaam's Donkey Talks" poster (from the Big Bible Poster Pack) 	Hang up the posters where kids can see them.

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.



LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Weaving Faith Into Life <i>about 20 min.</i> <i>(Choose 2 centers.)</i></p>	<p>Center 1: See That Donkey Speak Make talking donkey puppets.</p>	My Bible Playground, washable markers, pencils, several pairs of scissors, 1 paper fastener per child	Remove the Lesson 9 pages from each My Bible Playground student book.
	<p>Center 2: Donkey Food Eat snacks like donkeys and then talk about their experience.</p>	peanut-free trail mix, paper towels, antibacterial gel (optional)	
	<p>Center 3: Pin the Ears on the Donkey Play a game to learn about paying attention.</p>	blindfold, tape, 1 copy of the “Donkey Ears” page (at the end of this lesson), scissors Teacher Pack: “Balaam’s Donkey” poster	Cut out the ears from the “Donkey Ears” page. Hang the “Balaam’s Donkey” poster on the wall with the bottom of the poster touching the floor so the kids can reach the donkey’s head.
	<p>Center 4: Donkey Tag Play a game of Tag in which kids have to pay attention to avoid being caught.</p>	blindfolds	
<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Lasting Impressions <i>about 10 min.</i></p>	<p>Daily Challenges Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God’s Word.</p>	My Bible Playground, washable markers	
	<p>“Follow-the-Leader” Prayer Practice paying attention as they pray.</p>		
	<p>Weaving Faith at Home Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.</p>		

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.



Welcoming Song Supplies

CD player

Teacher Pack

CD: "Wherever You Go"
(Joshua 1:9) (track 5)

1

GETTING STARTED

Welcoming Song



Tip Consistently use the same signal to announce a transition to the next activity. You could flip the lights off and on, use a train whistle, have a puppet rustling inside a bag, or sing cleanup songs. Keep it simple, consistent, and fun.

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

As the children arrive, greet each child and welcome him or her with a smile. When it's time to begin, use your signal to bring the children together in a circle.

Say: **It's so wonderful to be together at church. Today we'll learn about a really unusual thing that God did to get the attention of a man in the Bible. We can learn to ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD. Let's sing a song about how God is with us all the time.** Lead children in doing the motions and singing "Wherever You Go" (Joshua 1:9) (track 5 on the CD).



Have I not commanded you? (*shrug shoulders as if asking a question*)

Be strong and courageous. (*flex muscles*)

Do not be terrified; (*pretend to hide*)

Do not be discouraged, (*make happy faces*)

For the Lord your God will be with you (*pretend to hold God's hand*)

Wherever you go. (*march around*)

Wherever you go. (*march around*)

(Repeat twice.)

Wherever you go. (*march around*)

Wherever you go. (*march around*)

Wherever you go. (*march around*)

"Wherever You Go" (Joshua 1:9) by Jay Stocker. © 2006 Group Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.

Say: **God is with us wherever we go. We'll learn about a guy named Balaam and find out how God got his attention. Balaam was a little distracted, but we can make sure we always ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD so we're always ready for what God's saying to us. Let's learn our Key Verse!**

2 KEY VERSE
ACTIVITY

God Is With Us

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Have kids sit in a circle. Open your Bible to Joshua 1:9, and show children the words. Tell kids that the Bible is God's special book.

Say: **Our Key Verse from the Bible, Joshua 1:9, says, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." That means we can ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD and let him help us be brave no matter what because God is with us. Let's practice our Key Verse together.** Lead kids in repeating the simplified Key Verse with you: **"God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).**

Say: **Let's do an activity that will help you understand the Key Verse.** Have half of the children form pairs. Have partners link arms. Have the other half of the children stand together in an area of the room and hold up their arms to be Trees. Encourage them to wiggle their fingers like leaves blowing in the wind.

Say: **Those of you who are linked to a partner, pretend you're going on a walk in the forest.** Walk with kids through the Trees. **Is your partner with you? Look, the wind is blowing the leaves on the trees. If you walk through this forest alone, you might get tagged and become a tree, but if you keep your partner with you, you'll be fine.** Add chairs or other obstacles for kids to maneuver around. If any kids become separated from their partners, the Trees can tag them.

Repeat the game, letting the Trees pair up to pretend to walk through a zoo. Have the other children pretend to be Zoo Animals and try to tag pairs as they walk by. If time permits, have kids switch and pretend to go somewhere else, such as the ocean or a park with squirrels.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What did you like best about your partner being with you wherever you went?**
- **How do you feel knowing that God is with you all the time in real life?**
- **What can you do to pay attention to God all the time since he's with you all the time?**

Say: **God is with us all the time. That means we can listen to God all the time. It's not like one of our friends who is only with us sometimes. We can ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD all the time so we know what he's asking us to do. I think it's time to hear from Theo. Let's find out more about our Bible passage for today.**



**God Is With Us
Supplies**

Bible



Theo's News Supplies

Surprise Box (any box
will do)

Theo puppet

CD player

Teacher Pack

CD: "Here, Theo"

(track 3)

"Balaam's Donkey"
poster

Theo's News Easy Prep

Place the poster in the
Surprise Box, and hide
the box where it's easily
accessible.

3

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Theo's News

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Say: **Friends, it's time for Theo's News!** Have the children sit in a circle. Then begin "Here, Theo" (track 3 on the CD). When the CD segment ends, bring out the Surprise Box, and put the Theophilus the FaithRetriever puppet on your hand. Then follow along with the script.

Theo: Cock-a-doodle-doo! Hi, everybody!

Teacher: Hello, Theo! What are you doing today?

Theo: I'm practicing talking like other animals today. Quack!

Teacher: Well, that's an unusual thing to do. Let's look in the Surprise Box to see what Theo dug up for us today.

(Invite a child to open the Surprise Box, and have the kids pass the poster of a donkey around the circle so everyone can see it up close. Give kids time to guess what they'll learn from the Bible today.)

Theo: I bet I can talk like a donkey. Hee-haw! Hee-haw!

Teacher: That's pretty good, Theo. Today's Bible passage is actually kind of similar to what you're doing today. God used a talking donkey to help save his people and get a man's attention. The donkey actually talked in a human voice and said human words.

Theo: Meow! That's really amazing! That donkey wasn't just pretending like me, huh?

Teacher: No, not at all, Theo! The donkey was helping with a very important job from God.

Theo: Like it was on a secret mission?

Teacher: Kinda like that, sure. No matter what's going on, we can ► **PAY ATTENTION TO GOD** and we'll be able to please him.

Theo: Have fun, boys and girls! Bark!

Teacher: Let's say goodbye to Theo.

Encourage the children to wave or say goodbye to Theo. Then put Theo away in a safe place for next week's use.

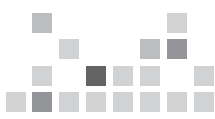
Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- Explain whether you liked hearing Theo use different voices from his own to talk to us today.
- How is that the same or different from a donkey actually talking in the Bible?
- What's one way you can try to pay more attention to God?

Say: **Theo helped us realize how important it is to ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD. When someone wasn't listening to God about something important in the Bible,**



God did something pretty incredible to get his attention. God might not use a talking donkey to get our attention, but we can listen closely and respond to what God wants us to do.

Bible Time: A Talking Donkey

What You'll Do

Open your Bible to Numbers 22:1-38, and show kids the words. Tell kids that the Bible is God's special book. Show kids the posters.

Say: **I'm going to tell you what happened in the Bible, and you'll take turns acting it out.** To start, choose someone to be Balaam, someone to be Balak's messenger, someone to be Balaam's donkey, and one other person to be the angel.

Say: **Balaam was a man who listened to all kinds of gods. Balaam did whatever would get him paid the most.** Have Balaam strut around acting very proud of the money he makes for himself. Freeze the scene.

Say: **One day, a ruler named Balak asked Balaam to help him. He wanted Balaam to talk to the gods and ask them to do something bad to the Israelites.** Have Balaam and the messenger negotiate with each other. Encourage Balaam to insist on lots of money. Freeze the scene. After this scene, allow kids to each choose an actor to tag and take the place of any of the actors that just had an active role.

Say: **Balaam and Balak didn't know that the Israelites were God's people. And God wasn't about to let bad things happen to his people. God told Balaam in a dream that he shouldn't do what the messenger was asking.** Have Balaam pretend to sleep while the angel tells Balaam that, and then have Balaam tell the messenger that he won't do what he's asking. After this scene, allow kids to tag in and take the place of any of the actors that just had an active role. Say: **The messenger went back to his master.**

But Balak was still afraid of God's people, so he sent another messenger. Balaam wanted to get paid, so he asked the gods about it again. God told Balaam to go. Have the messenger offer more money to Balaam, and have Balaam lie down to sleep. After this scene, allow kids to tag in and take the place of any of the actors that just had an active role.

Say: **The next day, Balaam saddled up his donkey and went with the messenger. Along the road, God put his angel in the road to block the way for Balaam. Balaam couldn't see the angel, but his donkey did and turned off the road to save herself and Balaam.** Have the angel stand in Balaam's way. Have the angel pretend to hold a sword. Have the donkey take Balaam off the side of the road. Freeze the scene. After this scene, allow kids to tag in and take the place of any of the actors that just had an active role.

Say: **Balaam wasn't happy, and he hit the donkey. He tried to make the donkey go farther, but the donkey smushed Balaam's foot against a rock as she tried to avoid the angel. Balaam was angry, so he hit the donkey again. The donkey still refused**



Bible Time: A Talking Donkey Supplies

Bible
tape

Teacher Pack

"Balaam's Donkey"
poster
"Balaam's Donkey Talks"
poster (from the Big Bible Poster Pack)

Bible Time: A Talking Donkey Easy Prep

Hang up the posters where kids can see them.



to take him forward, and she lay down in the road. Have Balaam pretend to hit the donkey. Have the angel stand near a chair so the donkey can pretend to push Balaam's foot into the chair. Have Balaam pretend to hit the donkey again. Then have the donkey lie down and refuse to go on. Freeze the scene. After this scene, allow kids to tag in and take the place of any of the actors that just had an active role.

Say: **God made it so the donkey could talk. She said, "What have I done to you to make you beat me?" Balaam told the donkey that she embarrassed him. He said he wanted to kill the donkey.** Have the donkey repeat what the donkey said in the Bible. Have Balaam be very angry with the donkey. Freeze the scene. After this scene, allow kids to tag in and take the place of any of the actors that just had an active role.

Say: **Then the donkey said, "I'm your donkey. Have I ever done this kind of thing before?" Balaam finally realized that the angel was standing in front of him. The angel told Balaam that if the donkey hadn't moved out of the way, the angel would've killed Balaam and saved the donkey.** Help the angel explain what was happening to Balaam after Balaam's donkey says, "I'm your donkey. Have I ever done this kind of thing before?" Freeze the scene. After this scene, allow kids to tag in and take the place of any of the actors that just had an active role.

Say: **Balaam decided to pay attention to what God said. He refused to disobey God, and the Israelites were saved. God used a talking donkey to save his people.** Have Balaam apologize and refuse to hurt God's people. Let the donkey ham it up a bit as a hero.

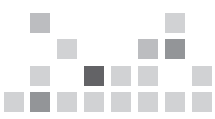
Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What surprises you about the fact that God made a donkey talk to get Balaam's attention?**
- **Explain whether you think it's easy or difficult for God to get your attention.**
- **What's one way you think God tries to get your attention?**

Say: **Just because God can do big things to get our attention doesn't mean we want to test that. God loves us, and things go best for us when we listen carefully to God. We can always ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD. It might mean paying less attention to some of the things that distract us, but it's worth it. Let's make sure we're paying attention to the things that matter most.**



4 WEAVING FAITH INTO LIFE



Choose at least two of the learning centers to help reinforce today's Bible lesson. Gather the needed materials, and put the supplies in an out-of-sight area until you're ready for them. Allow the children to choose which center they'd like to explore first. Then circulate among the children as they create and explore. Encourage them to make connections between their activities and the Bible by asking them the questions included with each center's description.

CENTER 1:

See That Donkey Speak

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Say: **God used a talking donkey to get Balaam's attention. Let's make a talking donkey puppet to remind us of what God did.**

Set out washable markers. Distribute the My Bible Playground pages, and have kids write their names on their papers. Help kids cut out the donkey's jaw from the bottom of the page and attach it to the page with a paper fastener.

Say: **Find a partner.** When kids are in pairs, ask them to think of a time they listened to God. Say: **Use your donkeys to tell your partners about the time you thought of.** Allow three minutes.

Say: **Use your donkeys to retell what happened between Balaam and his donkey.** Allow three minutes.

Have children answer the following questions in their pairs. Let children move the donkeys' mouths to answer the questions.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What seems strange or amazing to you about a donkey talking?**
- **Explain how it makes you feel knowing that God wants to talk with you.**
- **Tell about something you think God wants you to pay attention to in your life.**

Say: **God wants us to pay attention to him because he wants to talk to us. When we ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD, it makes him happy. We can pray, obey our parents, and listen to what the Bible tells us to know what God wants. Balaam wasn't listening to God. He just wanted what he thought was best for him, but God meant business.**

Center 1: See That Donkey Speak Supplies

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My Bible Playground
washable markers
pencils
several pairs of scissors
1 paper fastener per
child

Center 1: See That Donkey Speak Easy Prep

.....

Remove the Lesson
9 pages from each
My Bible Playground
student book.





Center 2: Donkey Food Supplies

peanut-free trail mix
paper towels
antibacterial gel
(optional)

ALLERGY ALERT

Center 3: Pin the Ears on the Donkey Supplies

blindfold
tape
1 copy of the “Donkey Ears” page
scissors
Teacher Pack
“Balaam’s Donkey” poster

Center 3: Pin the Ears on the Donkey Easy Prep

Cut out the ears from the “Donkey Ears” page.

Hang the “Balaam’s Donkey” poster on the wall with the bottom of the poster touching the floor so the kids can reach the donkey’s head.

CENTER 2: Donkey Food

What You’ll Do

Say: **Balaam’s donkey was doing as much as she could to take care of Balaam. Let’s eat our snacks like donkeys so we can remember the amazing thing God did with a donkey.**

Have children clean their hands. Then gather everyone around the table.

Place some trail mix on a paper towel for each child, and place the snacks on the table. Have your group pretend to be Balaam’s donkey and eat only with their mouths. Then gather kids in a circle.

Talk With Kids

Say: **Balaam learned to ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD. We can learn the same lesson. We ate like donkeys because God did a special miracle through a donkey. There are lots of ways God talks to us today. If we’re listening, it makes God happy.**

CENTER 3: Pin the Ears on the Donkey

What You’ll Do

Say: **Balaam’s donkey was paying attention to God better than Balaam was paying attention. Let’s play a game to remind us how the donkey listened to God.**

Point out the “Balaam’s Donkey” poster, and have kids take turns playing Pin the Ears on the Donkey.

Put the blindfold on one child at a time. Give the child a “Donkey Ears” card with tape on the back. Spin the child, and then have him or her try to put the ears on the appropriate spot on the donkey’s head. Say: **While each of you tries to get the ears onto the donkey, the rest of you will verbally try to guide the Pinner.**

Encourage kids to cheer others on as they wait for their turn.

Talk With Kids

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What was it like trying to pay attention to instructions while everyone was yelling?**
- **When is it hard for you to pay attention to God?**
- **What’s one thing you want to know God’s answer to?**



Say: **We tried to pay attention to the instructions during our game. It's important for us to ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD, like it was important for Balaam to listen. When we pay attention to God, we learn more and more about him.**



■ **CENTER 4:**

Donkey Tag

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Say: **Let's play a game of Tag to help us remember what God did to get Balaam's attention.** Choose two kids to be Angels. They will hold hands and work together. Have the rest of the kids form pairs to be Balaam and his Donkey. If you have an uneven number of kids, have three kids be Angels. Each pair of Balaam and the Donkey must hold hands.

Say: **Donkeys, put a blindfold on your Balaam. When I say "go," the Angels will try to tag the Balaams. If they succeed, that pair of Balaam and his Donkey will sit down until another Donkey can free you. "Go!"** Allow time. After kids have played a couple of minutes, have them all switch roles. Choose new Angels, and have pairs switch who's being Balaam and the Donkey.

Continue playing as time and interest allow.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What was it like to be guided without seeing what was going on?**
- **How is that like or unlike being guided by God?**
- **How can you pay attention when God is guiding you?**

Say: **Balaam and his donkey are just one example of the amazing things God has done to help people hear important messages from God. When we ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD, we grow closer to God and we'll do better at knowing what he is saying to us the next time we talk to God. Let's always ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD.**

Center 4: Donkey Tag Supplies

.....
blindfolds





Daily Challenges Supplies

My Bible Playground
washable markers

5 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Daily Challenges

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

After the children have cleaned up the centers, sit with kids in a circle on the floor. Review the lesson activities and the Bible Point, and then encourage the children to share what they enjoyed learning from the Bible today.

Also use this time to challenge kids in their faith. Encourage them to choose a Daily Challenge for applying today's lesson to their lives throughout the week. Use this challenge to encourage your children's growing relationships with Jesus.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Say: **Today we learned that we ► PAY ATTENTION TO GOD. I'd like each of you to choose one of these Daily Challenges to practice paying attention to God.**

Give kids these three Daily Challenge ideas to choose from:

1. **Make a pair of binoculars out of one empty paper towel tube cut in half and taped together. As you use the binoculars to find things around the house, remember that God wants you to pay attention to him just as closely.**
2. **Pray to God with your mom or dad. After you pray, spend a little time being quiet so you can pay attention to God.**
3. **Use highlighters to draw a picture of something God wants you to remember. Put the bright-colored picture in a place where you'll see it every day. Think of the bright colors to help you remember to pay attention to God.**

Say: **If you want to make binoculars, circle choice number 1. If you want to pray with your parents, circle choice number 2. If you want to make a bright-colored picture, circle choice number 3.** Check that each child circled a choice on his or her My Bible Playground page. Make sure you tell kids the challenge you choose. Your commitment will inspire children and will give them an opportunity to see God at work in your life as well as in theirs!

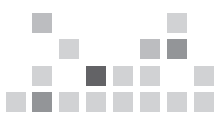
“Follow-the-Leader” Prayer

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Have kids follow the motions as you pray this prayer. Allow time after each section for kids to repeat after you.

Pray: **Dear God,**

We're so thankful that you're always with us. *(hold arms to chest and give self a hug)*
We want to pay attention to you. *(cup hand around ear as if listening)*



Please help us not be distracted. Encourage kids to tell God some things that distract them from paying attention to him.

Thank you for your help, and thank you for loving us. (*jump and yell "Thanks, God!"*)

We love you, too. (*hold arms wide as if giving God a hug*)

In Jesus' name, amen.



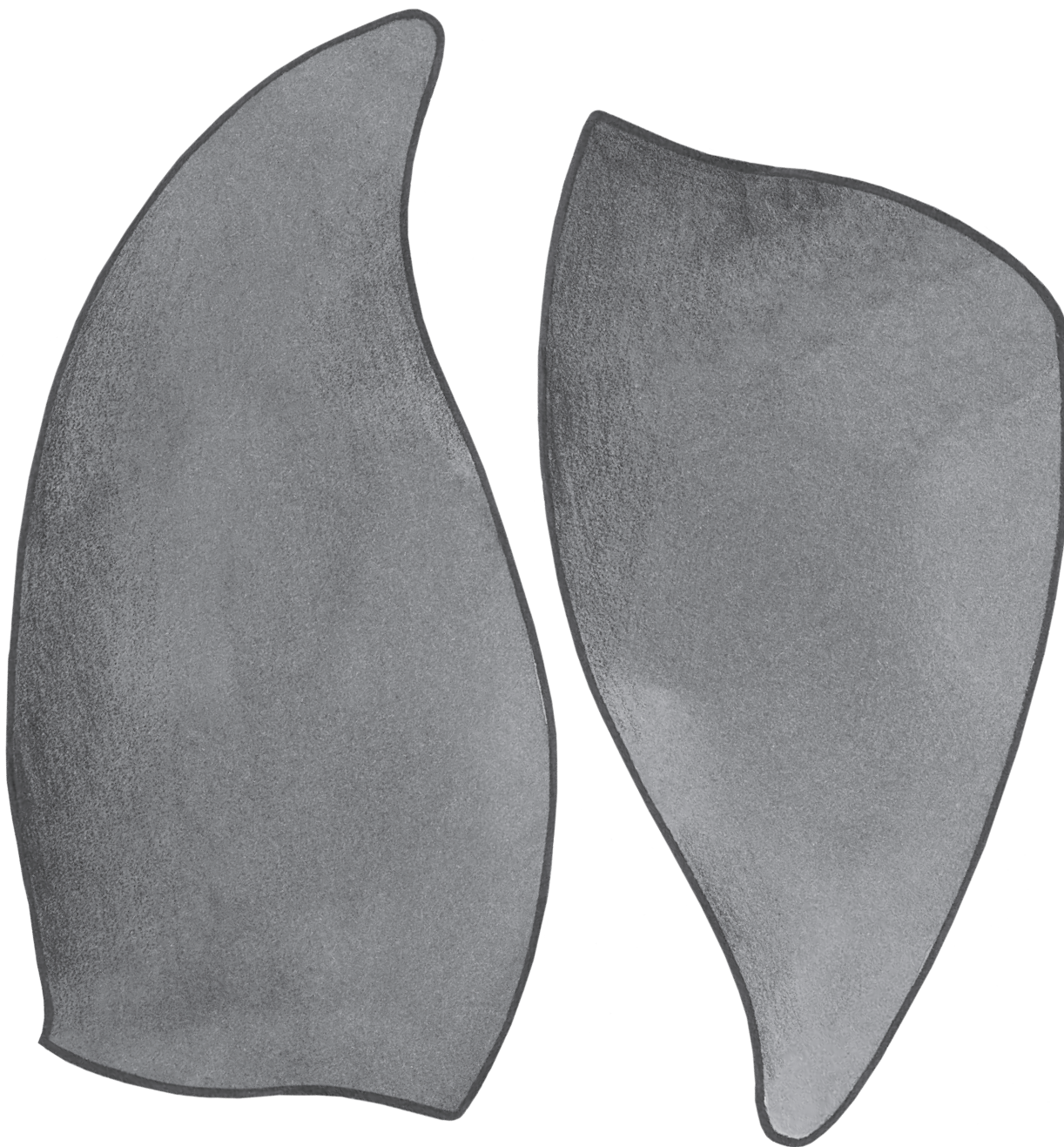
Weaving Faith at Home

Have children take home their My Bible Playground pages whether they worked on them or not. Have the children tell their parents the challenge they committed to in the "Daily Challenges" activity. Encourage parents to help their kids fulfill this commitment throughout the week. By working together and focusing on the same goals, you and parents can help children weave faith into their lives!

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



Donkey Ears



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TO COPY