

LESSON 2
BALAAM'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.

MEMORY VERSE: God is able to do far more than we could ever ask for or imagine. He does everything by his power that is working in us. —[Ephesians 3:20](#)

CURIOSITY Large Group or Small Group

An object lesson, experiment, or activity that sparks curiosity, encourages exploration, and gets kids thinking about the wonder of God.

- Welcome Question: What are some plans you have for your life? What do you want to do when you grow up?
- Free Play: Brain Teaser: Codebreakers
- Countdown
- Curiosity Questions
- Declaring God's Wonder


BELIEF Large Group

A deep and interactive dive into Scripture that guides kids into knowing God more deeply, exploring His big story, and marveling at His wonder.

- Prayer of Invitation
- God's Big Story: Hear It, Watch It, Experience It!
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Memory Verse: [Ephesians 3:20](#)

FAITH Small Group

An intentional conversation that helps kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own, emboldening their faith and fostering a deeper understanding of their place in God's kingdom.

- Discussion Questions for Younger and Older Kids
- Small Group Prayer Time
- Blessing Your Kids

EXTRA TIME Large Group or Small Group

An interactive worship response activity that creates space for God to remind kids of these core truths: I am known, I am loved, I am led, and my life can tell of God's wonder.

- Pin the Mouth on the Donkey

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

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 them, 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!

Large Group or Small Group

Spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

Welcome Question

The following question will be written on a whiteboard: “What are some plans you have for your life? What do you want to do when you grow up?”



As kids arrive ...

Warmly welcome kids by name. Show them the [Welcome Question](#). If you have younger kids, be sure to read the questions for them. Allow the kids to answer one or both of the questions about plans they have for their future. If time allows, let them share their answers with a friend or a leader.

Free Play

Tables will be set with games, toys, and activities for kids to enjoy until the lesson begins. This is a great opportunity to get to know kids and build relationships with them.

This is also a great time for a bathroom reminder!

Brain Teaser: Codebreakers

SUPPLIES: markers, pens, or pencils; [Codebreaker Sheet Older Kids](#) (1 per older kid), [Codebreaker Sheet Younger Kids](#) (1 per younger kid)

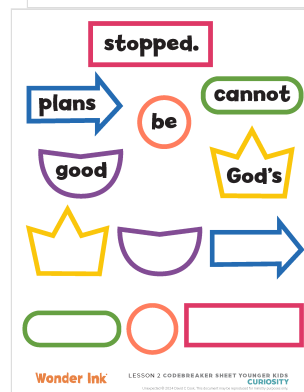
Ahead of time, print copies of the [Codebreaker Sheet Older Kids](#), one per older kid, and the [Codebreaker Sheet Younger Kids](#), one per younger kid. Both sheets include a cipher kids will use to decode a message that reveals today's Wonder Truth: God's Good Plans Cannot Be Stopped. The ciphers vary in difficulty, so look them over ahead of time to decide which ages will use the [Older Kids Sheet](#) and which will use the Younger Kids Sheet.



Hand a Codebreaker Sheet to each kid and set out markers, pens, or pencils.

Each of you has a very special message on your sheets, but there's a problem! It's not written plainly. You must use the codebreaker to decode the message. Let's work together to figure out what it says!

Encourage kids to work together in pairs or small groups to decode the message. Explain to younger kids that each shape on their sheets represents a word. They must write the corresponding word on each blank shape to decode the message. Explain to older kids that every letter in the alphabet is represented by a symbol. They must write the corresponding letter above each symbol to decode the message. When all the kids have successfully decoded the message, invite everyone to read it together: **God's Good Plans Cannot Be Stopped.**



Leader Tip: For Younger Kids. Invite volunteers to come alongside younger kids to assist any who need help decoding or writing their messages. For beginning readers, consider cutting out the symbols with words on them ahead of time so kids can glue them over the blank symbols.

Countdown Video

Play the [countdown video](#) provided and then show it every week 5 minutes before your official start time to signify clean up time.



Curiosity Questions

At your start time ...

Welcome the kids and let them know you're glad they came to church today. Call on several kids to share their answers to the Welcome Question: **What are some plans you have for your life? What do you want to do when you grow up?**

Today, we are going to hear about a prophet named Balaam (BAY-luhm) and his donkey and how God did something unexpected to help Balaam follow God's good plans. But, first, it's time to be curious.

Pose the following "I'm curious" questions. Say "I'm curious ..." before each question and give kids a chance to think about and answer each one. After each question, consider having kids share their ideas with a neighbor before you call on one or two of them to share with the group.

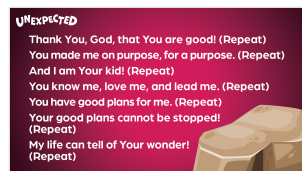
I'm curious ...

- **Have you ever heard someone say God spoke to him or her? Tell about it.**
- **If God spoke to you, what do you think He would say?**

Declaring God's Wonder

SUPPLIES: Donkey Declaration Slide

Display the [Donkey Declaration Slide](#). Read each line boldly and invite kids to repeat after you.



Thank You, God, that You are good! *(Kids repeat.)*

You made me on purpose, for a purpose. *(Kids repeat.)*

And I am Your kid! *(Kids repeat.)*

You know me, love me, and lead me. *(Kids repeat.)*

You have good plans for me. *(Kids repeat.)*

Your good plans cannot be stopped! *(Kids repeat.)*

My life can tell of Your wonder! *(Kids repeat.)*

Large Group

Guide kids into knowing God, exploring His big story, and marveling at His wonder.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God's Good Plans Cannot Be Stopped

SCRIPTURE: Numbers 22–23

MEMORY VERSE: Ephesians 3:20

Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words: **God, thank You so much for being here with us through Your Holy Spirit. We are excited to be with You and to learn from You. Help us learn more about Your love and Your good plans for us. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

God's Big Story Intro

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid), [Donkey Title Slide](#), [Balaam's Donkey God's Big Story Video](#)



Explain that Numbers records the history of God's people, the Israelites, during their 40 years of wandering in the desert after escaping from Egypt but before entering the land God promised them.

Then do one or both of the following:

- View [Balaam's Donkey God's Big Story Video](#)
- Use the following Balaam's Donkey Experience It! Script

Leader Tip: The name "Balaam" is pronounced BAY-luhm, and the name "Balak" is pronounced BAY-lak.

FOR OLDER KIDS: Ahead of time, invite two adult volunteers or older kids to read today's passage out loud. Assign each a group of verses: [Numbers 22:1–2, 5–6, 20, 23–31, 35](#) and [23:6–7, 11–12](#).

Invite kids to open their Bibles to the book of Numbers and find [chapter 22](#). Explain that Numbers records the history of God's people, the Israelites, during their 40 years of wandering in the desert after escaping from Egypt but before entering the land God promised them. **Let's start by reading part of God's big story directly from the Bible. Afterward, we will watch and experience more of the story!**

Display the [Donkey Title Slide](#). Encourage kids to place their fingers on the large 22 as the first volunteer reads [Numbers 22:1–2, 5–6, 20, 23–31, 35](#). Next have kids point to the large 23 as the second volunteer reads [23:6–7, 11–12](#). Then do one or both of the following:

- View [Balaam's Donkey God's Big Story Video](#)
- Use the following Balaam's Donkey Experience It! Script

Watch God's Big Story

Watch the [Balaam's Donkey God's Big Story!](#)



LESSON 2 BALAAM'S DONKEY

EXPERIENCE IT! SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: [Charades Answer Sheet](#)

Ahead of time, print the [Charades Answer Sheet](#). You will need four volunteers for this experience. Consider choosing your volunteers prior to the start of the Experience It! Script in order to keep the story moving along.

Gather kids together. **Today we are going to hear a part of God's big story from the Bible that shows just how amazing our God is. Make sure to pay attention and be ready for a little challenge along the way to see how well you've been following along with this story.**

When God's people, the Israelites, had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years, God freed them and brought them to the edge of the land of Canaan. God promised their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that He would give Canaan to the Israelites in the future. But the Israelites didn't trust God and were too afraid to enter the land. God was angry, but He was also patient with His people. He took them on a 40-year journey through the wilderness, showing them how much He loved them by caring for their needs and protecting them from their enemies. On that long trip, God showed them over and over they could trust Him to keep His promises.

Charades Answer Sheet

1. Nervous
2. Powerful
3. Sleeping
4. Donkey

Wonder Ink

LESSON 2 CHARADES ANSWER SHEET
BELIEF

The people of Israel had been journeying a long time and decided to camp in the land of Moab. That made Moab's king, Balak, very nervous. He had heard stories about the people of Israel and was afraid they would try to take his land. He had also heard stories of their powerful God who protected them.

Balak came up with a plan. He sent messengers to the prophet Balaam and asked him to put a curse on the Israelites. King Balak hoped this curse would keep the Israelites from defeating his armies. Balaam was in another city near the great river, the Euphrates. When the messengers came to him, Balaam told them to spend the night while he asked God what he should do. At first, God told Balaam not to go with them. But when they came back and asked Balaam again, God allowed him to go with them, but God warned Balaam to only do what God told him to do and say. Riding his donkey, Balaam set off to see the king. However, God was angry as Balaam left. We don't know why, but we do know God cared about Balaam and about his people, and He decided Balaam needed a reminder not to curse them. So, God sent an angel to block Balaam's path.

Before we go any further, let's see just how well you've been following along with God's big story. I'm going to need four super volunteers to come help me review this story from the Bible.

Our volunteers have a very important job of helping all of us review this story. There are a lot of different names and details, so we're going to do our best to recall those details. There is one little catch, though. Our volunteers can't speak when they help us review. I'm going to show them a word, and they will act out that word using different motions and gestures to try to get you to guess that word. They can't talk at all! I know this task sounds difficult, but if we were all paying attention, we should do fine. Every word describes something from our story.

Show the first volunteer the word *Nervous* from the [Charades Answer Sheet](#).

Leader Tip: For Younger Kids. Younger kids and beginning readers can participate in this activity. Simply whisper the word instead of using the [Charades Answer Sheet](#).

Our first volunteer is going to act out a word from our story. When you think you know the word, shout it out!

Leader Tip: Ahead of time, consider hints you can give the volunteers if they have trouble acting out these words. For example, you could discreetly show the volunteers the action of biting your nails for *Nervous* or flexing your muscles for *Powerful*.

After kids guess *nervous* or *scared*, explain how this word ties into the story. **Great job! Yes, our word is Nervous. King Balak was very nervous when he saw all the Israelites camping nearby.** Allow the first volunteer to sit back down with the group.

Show the second volunteer the word *Powerful*. **Let's see if you can guess this next word from our story.** Give time for kids to guess. **That's right! Now who from our story was powerful?** Pause for kids to answer. **God is! King Balak was nervous when he saw so many Israelites because he knew that the Israelites' God is a powerful God.**

Continue with the third and fourth words in the charades game: sleeping and donkey. After the third word, remind kids that Balaam told the messengers from King Balak to spend the night while he waited for God to tell him what to do. After the fourth word, say the following:

Great job guessing all the words! Our last word is donkey because Balaam rode a donkey on his way to see King Balak. Now, we're about to hear a very interesting part of this story from the

Bible. Balaam's donkey is going to try to tell Balaam there is an angel blocking their path, but you just saw how difficult it sometimes is to communicate without words.

Allow the third and fourth volunteers to return to their seats.

Balaam couldn't see the angel, but his donkey could! Balaam's donkey kept swerving and refusing to move, and Balaam got so upset that three times he hit his donkey and yelled at it. Suddenly, the donkey opened its mouth and started talking!

"What have I done to you? Why did you hit me these three times?" the donkey asked. "I'm the one you have always ridden. ... Have I ever made you look foolish before?" (Numbers 22:28, 30).

You might think Balaam was too shocked to respond, but he talked right back to the donkey! "I wish I had a sword in my hand," Balaam told the animal (Numbers 22:29). Then God let Balaam see the angel. The angel reminded Balaam not to curse the Israelites but only to speak the words God would give him. When Balaam got to King Balak, he told the king, four different times, "I cannot curse these people. I can only bless them because that is what God is telling me to do."

Back in the Israelite camp, they didn't know about all God was doing to stay true to His promise to protect them. He even used a talking donkey to ensure that Balaam could only bless the Israelites, not curse them.

Even though we can't see God and we sometimes don't understand His plans, He is always faithful to His promises. Sometimes, God may use unusual ways to guide us, and He may do things we don't fully understand, but His faithfulness and care for us go beyond our wildest imagination. God's good plans cannot be stopped.

Connecting the Wonder Truth

SUPPLIES: [Donkey Wonder Truth Slide](#)

Display the [Donkey Wonder Truth Slide](#).



Our Wonder Truth today is **GOD'S GOOD PLANS CANNOT BE STOPPED.**

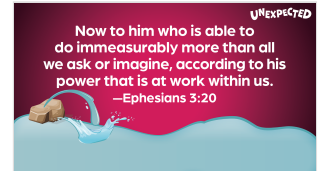
Where did you see our Wonder Truth in the story? Allow kids to answer freely.

After God held back the Red Sea so His people, the Israelites, could escape Egypt, they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. During this time, God protected them from being cursed by Balaam. God had promised land to His people, and His good plans cannot be stopped. 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!

Memory Verse

SUPPLIES: Memory Verse Slide

Our Memory Verse for the Unexpected series is [Ephesians 3:20](#). It says, “God is able to do far more than we could ever ask for or imagine. He does everything by His power that is working in us.” Just like our story today, God can use anything and everything to make sure His good plans cannot be stopped.



Display the Memory Verse [Slide](#). Read the Scripture aloud and then invite the kids to read it with you. Encourage them to say the verse as quietly as they can, as loudly as they can, and then say it with their eyes closed.

Small Group

Help kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own story.

Divide your group into smaller groups based on age. If your group is already small, stay together for this time.

MEMORY VERSE

**Now to him who is able to do
immeasurably more than all we ask or
imagine, according to his power that
is at work within us.**

—Ephesians 3:20 (NIV)

Questions: Younger Kids

- In God's big story today, what did King Balak want Balaam to do to Israel?
- What animal did God use to get Balaam's attention? What did the animal do?
- What did the animal see in the road that Balaam couldn't see?
- What did God tell Balaam to do? Do you think it was easy or hard for Balaam to do what God said? Why?
- Why do you think Balaam listened to God instead of the king?
- How does it make you feel to know that God's good plans for you cannot be stopped?

Sometimes we are sad, and things aren't the way we like them. But guess what? Even then, we can remember that all of God's good plans will happen. God is able, more than we can ask or imagine, to make sure His plans can't be stopped. We can trust in God's love and care for us. Let's spend some time talking with God in prayer right now.

Prayer Time: Younger Kids

Invite kids to pray for each other by sharing prayer requests and praises. Remind kids that God has good plans for them, and we can trust that He hears our prayers.

Questions: Older Kids

- God's plans were for Balaam to speak His words about the people of Israel, not to curse them. What did God do to make sure His plans could not be stopped?
- God opened Balaam's eyes so he could see what the donkey saw. What did Balaam see?
- What message did the angel have for Balaam? How did he respond?
- It took courage for Balaam to listen and to obey God instead of the king. When are some times you chose to obey God even when it was hard?
- God offered grace to Balaam by letting him have multiple chances to listen to God. How does God show grace to us?
- Neither Balaam's plans nor Balak's plans came to be, but God's good plans could not be stopped. What does this tell us about our plans versus God's plans? How does it make you feel to know that God's good plans cannot be stopped?

Sometimes we think everything is going wrong. In those times, we can remember that not only will all God's good plans happen, but God is able, more than we can ask or imagine, to make sure His plans can't be stopped. We can trust in God's love and care for us. Let's spend time talking with Him in prayer now.

Prayer Time: Older Kids

Invite kids to pray for each other by sharing prayer requests and praises. Remind kids that God has good plans for them, and we can trust that He hears our prayers.

Blessing Your Kids

Speak this blessing over your kids, as a group or as individuals. If you bless kids individually, insert each name into the blessing.

Blessing: May the Lord go before you and behind you and surround you on every side. May you know you are loved and that God's good plans for you can never be stopped. And may God fill you with His peace this week.



Large Group or Small Group

Use the following activity to keep kids engaged during pick-up and reinforce the lesson.

GAME 2: PIN THE MOUTH ON THE DONKEY

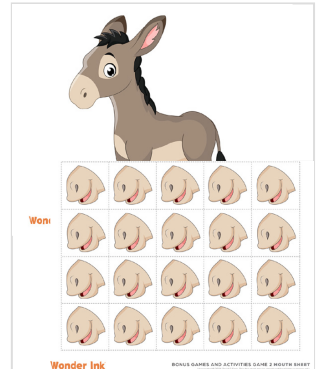
SUPPLIES: blindfold (1 or more), [Donkey Sheet](#) (1 or more), [Mouth Sheet](#) (1 or more)

This game works great with the Balaam's Donkey lesson!

In this game, kids will play a modified version of “Pin the Tail on the Donkey” with the goal of placing the donkey’s mouth on its face.

Tape the Donkey Sheet to the wall where kids can reach it. Place loops of tape on the back of the mouth cutouts.

Gather kids together. **Today we’re going to play Pin the Mouth on the Donkey! Does that sound like a game you’ve played before?** Allow kids to respond. **You’re right! Our game is a lot like Pin the Tail on the Donkey, but instead of placing a tail on a donkey, our goal is to place a mouth in its proper place on the donkey.** Explain that kids will take turns being blindfolded and trying to place the mouth on the donkey’s face.



Once each kid places the mouth on the donkey, she can remove her blindfold to see how she did. You can give mouths to each kid and have them write their names on them, or you can use the same donkey mouth over and over.

Leader Tip: *For Older Kids.* Consider turning this game into a relay race. Prepare two donkeys and two blindfolds, and help kids form two teams. Teams line up, and kids go one at a time. The winner can be determined by which team finishes first. Or provide a donkey mouth for each kid and leave all the mouths on the donkey until everyone has had a turn. Whichever team has more mouths on their donkey’s face wins!

To help all kids participate during the game, consider having the kids who are not blindfolded yell “hee” or “haw” to let the blindfolded person know whether or not she is going in the right direction. (For example, “hee” can mean “correct way!” while “haw” can mean “wrong way!”)

Good job giving Balaam’s donkey a mouth to speak with! When donkeys open their mouths, they normally say, “Hee-haw!” But God can miraculously make even donkeys talk to accomplish His plans! God’s good plans cannot be stopped.