

## 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 can do more than we could ever imagine. —from [Ephesians 3:20](#)

## CURIOSITY

Four options for interactive hands-on activities to help kids begin thinking about the wonder of God.

- Free Play
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Curiosity Activity: Complete the Puzzle



## BELIEF

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

- Worship
- Prayer of Invitation
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Memory Verse: [From Ephesians 3:20](#)

## FAITH

An intentional interactive discussion that helps kids discover the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own.

- Circle Time: Discussion
- Prayer and Blessing

## IDENTITY

An interactive activity to keep kids engaged during pick-up and reinforce the lesson.

- Game: Donkey Races

**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.

**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 the Israelites, 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!

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

## Free Play

### As kids arrive...

Greet kids warmly as they arrive and briefly explain the play stations. Invite them to play at any of the play stations.

**Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas of what we'll be learning about today?**

## Worship Playlist

### During free play...

Play one of the Spotify playlists for background music while kids play.

## Clean Up

### At the end of free play...

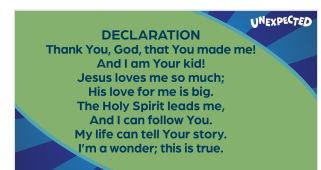
Play the Clean Up video to signify time to clean up toys and activities. Then, gather kids on sit spots, benches, or chairs to begin the lesson.

## Declaring God's Wonder

**SUPPLIES:** Early Childhood [Slide](#)

Display the Declaration [Slide](#) and encourage the kids to say the statements and do the motions with you.

**Hello, friends! I am so glad to be here with all of you at church today! We always start by saying our declaration together. These words reminds us of what God says is TRUE about me and you. Let's say these words together. Repeat after me!**



**Thank You, God, that You made me!** *(Kids repeat.)*

Make prayer hands, then point up to God and to yourself.

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

Put your hands on your hips.

**Jesus loves me so much;** *(Kids repeat.)*

Spread your arms out wide to your side one at a time, then pull them in for a hug around your chest.

**His love for me is big.** *(Kids repeat.)*

Hold your arms up high and wide above your head.

**The Holy Spirit leads me,** *(Kids repeat.)*

Bring your arms down from the sky, making a path in front of you.

**And I can follow You.** *(Kids repeat.)*

March like you're following the leader.

**My life can tell Your story,** *(Kids repeat.)*

Hold your hands in front of you like an open book.

**I'm a wonder; this is true.** *(Kids repeat.)*

Put your hands up, shaking your fingers, celebrating ("praise hands").

## Curiosity Activity: Complete the Puzzle

**SUPPLIES:** simple puzzle with a solid back, small bag

Pick a simple puzzle to use with an image of something easily identifiable for kids, such as a dog, cat, boat, etc. Before kids arrive, take apart a simple puzzle and put all the pieces except one in a bag. Set the back of the puzzle nearby. Take the last piece of the puzzle (a middle piece) and hide it somewhere in your room. When you are ready to start the activity, have kids sit nearby and place the back of the puzzle in front of them.

**Who likes to do puzzles? Would you help me put together this puzzle?** Allow the kids to respond.  
**Great! I have a bag of puzzle pieces here that go with our puzzle. Each of you can pick a piece out of my bag.**

Have each kid pick a puzzle piece or two out of your bag (depending on how many kids you have—make sure you use all of the pieces in the bag).

**When we work on a puzzle, we like to have a plan! I like to put in all the edge pieces first. We can tell a piece is an edge piece because it will have one or two straight edges with no bumps. Look at your puzzle piece(s) and see if you have an edge piece. If you think you have an edge piece, hold it up. Let's put the edge pieces in our puzzle first.** Call up kids with edge pieces and help them place the pieces in the right spots on the puzzle back. Keep in mind that preschool-appropriate puzzles may not have straight edges on the outer pieces.

**Great job! Next, I like to see if I can find something I recognize on puzzle pieces. This puzzle we are doing has a dog on it** (or name the image your puzzle shows). **If you think your puzzle piece has part of the dog on it** (or whatever image your puzzle shows), **hold it up. Great! Let's add those pieces to our puzzle next.** Continue giving kids clues for pieces until the puzzle is almost complete.

**We had a great plan to put together our puzzle, but something is wrong! What's wrong with our puzzle?** (The kids should answer that there is a piece missing!) **A piece is missing, and now we can't complete our puzzle. You know, this puzzle is like our lives sometimes. We have a plan, but things**

**don't always go according to our plans. The good news is that God has a plan for all of us and His good plans cannot be stopped! Let's see if we can find the last piece of the puzzle. Can you help me look around the room for it?** Let kids look for the piece. After they find it, add the last piece to the puzzle and remind the kids that God's good plans cannot be stopped!



## Belief

### LESSON 2 EARLY CHILDHOOD

*Guide kids into knowing God more deeply, 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:** From Ephesians 3:20

### Worship

**SUPPLIES:** Worship Music videos

**Today, we'll learn how God's good plans cannot be stopped. Let's sing about God's good plans together!**

Play songs and encourage the kids to sing and dance as they praise God.

### 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 for being with us. Please help us hear from You today. Open our ears and our minds so we can hear what You have to say to us today. Help us learn that Your good plans cannot be stopped. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

### God's Big Story

**SUPPLIES:** Bible

Hold up a Bible and show the kids. Tell them today's story comes from the book of Numbers in the Bible. Open a Bible and show them where the story is found.

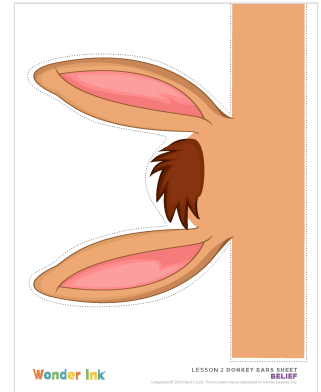
Note to leaders: In this story, Balaam hits his donkey several times. Be aware that extra conversation about this might be needed with some kids who could be sensitive to this.

## God's Big STORY SCRIPT: BALAAM'S DONKEY

**SUPPLIES:** Bible, tape, [God's Big Story Video](#), [Donkey Ears Sheet](#) (1 per kid)

Ahead of time, print a [Donkey Ears Sheet](#) for each kid and cut out. Tape the strips together to create a headband that kids can wear.

**In today's story, we're going to hear about a donkey. You can help with the story by pretending to be the donkey!** Hand out donkey ears to each kid and have kids put them on. **Every time you hear the word donkey you can say "Hee-haw" like a donkey! Let's practice. "Donkey!"** Encourage kids to say, "Hee-haw." **Great job! Let's listen carefully to our story.**



**God's people, the Israelites, had been on a long trip and they decided to camp in the land of a king named Balak. The king was worried because he had heard stories of their powerful God who protected them.**

**Balak came up with a plan. He sent some men to ask a prophet named Balaam to put a curse on the Israelites. Balaam told the men 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 him again, God allowed Balaam to go, but God warned him to only do what God told him to do and say. Riding his donkey (pause for kids to say, "Hee-haw"), 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 His people, the Israelites, as well as Balaam, and He decided Balaam needed a reminder not to curse the Israelites. So God sent an angel to block Balaam's path.**

**Balaam couldn't see the angel, but his donkey (pause for kids to say, "Hee-haw") could! Balaam's donkey (pause for kids to say, "Hee-haw") kept swerving to avoid the angel. Eventually, the donkey (pause for kids to say, "Hee-haw") refused to move. Balaam got upset with his donkey (pause for kids to say, "Heehaw"). Suddenly, the donkey (pause for kids to say, "Hee-haw") opened its mouth and started talking!**

**But this time he didn't say, "Hee-haw!" Repeat what he said after me. He said, "What have I done to you?" Encourage kids to say, "What have I done to you?" He also said, "Why are you upset with me?" Encourage kids to say, "Why are you upset with me?"**

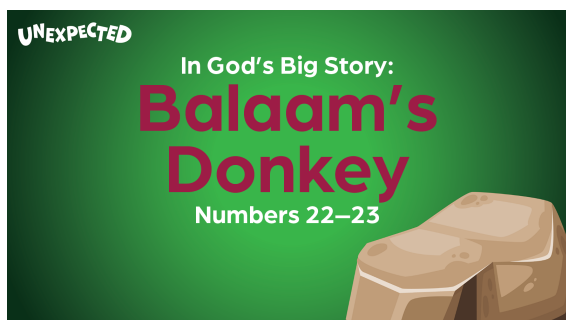
**You might think Balaam was too surprised to respond, but he talked back to the donkey (pause for kids to say, "Hee-haw")! Then God let Balaam see the angel. The angel reminded Balaam not to curse God's people but only to speak the words that God would give him. When Balaam got to King Balak, he told 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."**

**Even when we can't see God or understand His plans, He always keeps 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 imaginations. God's good plans cannot be stopped.**



## Watch God's Big Story

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



## Connecting the Wonder Truth

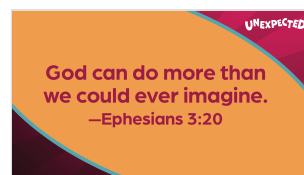
Our Wonder Truth today is **GOD'S GOOD PLANS CANNOT BE STOPPED.**

God protected His people from being cursed by Balaam while they wandered in the wilderness. God cared for His people, the Israelites, and God cares for us! God's good plans cannot be stopped. His greatest plan was sending His Son, Jesus, to save us!

## Memory Verse

**SUPPLIES:** [Memory Verse Slide](#)

Display the Memory Verse slide.



In our story today, we heard about a unique and interesting way that God spoke to Balaam! God may not speak to us through donkeys like He did for Balaam, but the greatest way God speaks to us is through His Word, the Bible. We can know what God is like and understand His words by hearing and learning verses from the Bible. Let's learn one together for this month's Memory Verse. It's from the book of Ephesians, which is a letter in the New Testament. What does this verse tell us about what God is like? Allow the kids to respond.

Encourage the kids to do the motions and say the verse with you.

- **GOD**—*Point up.*
- **CAN DO MORE THAN**—*Spread your arms wide.*
- **WE COULD EVER IMAGINE.**—*Point to your head.*
- **FROM EPHESIANS 3:20**—*Hold your hands together in front, then open your palms, as if opening a book.*

Let's play a game as we practice our Memory Verse! Let's see how high we can build our tower as we say our verse! Show the container of blocks and give each child a block. If you have fewer than 10 kids, give some kids more than one block. **We're going to see how high we can make a tower.**

Arrange the kids in a line so they know what order to go in when stacking blocks. Help the kids say the verse and encourage each kid at the front of the line to add a block on top of the tower with each word the group says. After that kid stacks a block, another kid will stack a block for the next word, and so on. When the group says, "[Ephesians 3:20](#)," the person at the front of the line gets to knock the tower down. Repeat as time allows.

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **How high do you think we could build our tower? How high do you think God could build a tower?**
- **Is there anything that God can't do? How do you know?**

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

## Circle Time: Discussion and Prayer

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **What animal did God use to talk to Balaam?** *(a donkey)*
- **Why did the donkey stop walking?** *(An angel was blocking the way.)*
- **What did God tell Balaam to do?** *(only speak the words that He would give him)*
- **Why was Balak worried when God's people were camping nearby?** *(He had heard that God was powerful and took care of them.)*
- **How does it make you feel knowing God's good plans cannot be stopped?**
- **If you could hear any animal talking, which animal would you want to hear from?**

Sometimes we may not understand why something is happening, but it is good for us to remember that God is faithful and He keeps His promises. God's good plans cannot be stopped. Let's talk to God now in prayer!

Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises and to pray for each other. Some kids may not be comfortable praying out loud. That's OK! Encourage them to pray silently and to thank God for reminding us that His good plans cannot be stopped.

## Responding in Worship: Breath Prayers

God can speak in unexpected ways. He even used a donkey to speak in God's big story today! God might not cause a donkey talk to us, but He can talk to us in other ways. He speaks to us and shares His plans for us through the Bible, through other people, through worship, and through prayer. Sometimes it can be hard for us to hear God. Let's do some breath prayers together to help us focus on God. Let's pray some of God's Word together and listen for Him to speak to us.

Everybody take a deep breath in. Now let it out. That's how we do a breath prayer. We think the words of the prayer while breathing in and out. This allows our bodies and minds to focus on God together. I'll say the first part of each breath prayer while you breathe in and then the second part while you breathe out.

- **When I am afraid** (take a deep breath in), **I will trust God** (let your breath out). [Psalm 56:3](#)
- **God knows the plans** (take a deep breath in) **He has for me** (let your breath out). [Jeremiah 29:11](#)
- **God loves me so much** (take a deep breath in) **that He gave His only Son for me** (let your breath out). [John 3:16](#)

- **I can do anything** (takes a deep breath in) **because God gives me strength** (let your breath out). **Philippians 4:13**
- **I can trust in God** (take a deep breath in) **with all my heart** (let your breath out). **Proverbs 3:5**

**When you are scared or afraid or you feel like you don't understand what's happening, you can do these breath prayers and remember that God's good plans cannot be stopped.**

**Leader Tip:** Breath prayers are a great tool for kids to use when they are feeling anxious or afraid. Even if they can't remember a verse to pray, teach them to just say, "Jesus, help me" while inhaling and exhaling.

## Prayer and Blessing

Pray with the kids, thanking God for His good plans and promises.

**Let's talk to God. God, thank You for keeping Your promises. Thank You for always having a good plan for us. Help us remember that Your good plans cannot be stopped. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands were open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

**Blessing:** **May you always remember that God's good plans cannot be stopped. God wants the best for you and will always love you and take care of you. May you remember that even when you don't understand why something is happening, God is there with you.**

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

#### Game: Donkey Races

Have kids line up against one wall of the room. Make sure there is a clear path to the other side of the room.

**We're going to play a game where we'll pretend to be donkeys!** If you used the donkey ears as part of the God's Big Story teaching, you could have kids wear them for this game. **Let's get down on all fours like we're donkeys. Have kids pretend to be donkeys.**

**When I say, "Go," you're going to run like a donkey to the other side of the room, but there is one catch! Do you remember what made the donkey stop in our story? Allow kids to answer. It was an angel! When I say, "angel," you have to freeze and shout, "God's good plans cannot be stopped!" and then you can continue on. Are you ready?**

When you are ready, say, "Go," but stop the kids about halfway across the room by shouting, "angel!" Kids should freeze and shout, "God's good plans cannot be stopped!" before continuing across the room. Repeat as time allows.