

Balaam, the Donkey, and the Angel



Overview

Materials You'll Need

- clothespin
- wiggly eyes
- white paper
- glue
- scissors
- brown markers



Scriptures

Num 22:1-38; 24:10-14

Bible Truth Objective(s)

God wants us to obey Him and do what is right

Behavioral Objective(s)

To follow the will of God; do not disobey God on purpose

Memory Verse

"Only the word that I speak to you,
that you shall speak." (Num 22:35)



Bible Knowledge

Balaam, the Sorcerer

Balaam was a sorcerer, one of many prophets of eastern religions who worshipped all the gods of the land. These false teachers often had great influence. The king of Moab, Balak, paid Balaam to use his powers to place a curse on the Israelites. However, Balaam first asked God's permission to curse Israel. When God told him he could not, Balaam turned away the messengers from Moab. Then Balak sent more people, with more silver and gold, to convince Balaam to help Moab. Again, Balaam asked God for His permission. This time, God said that he could follow the messengers to see what Balak wanted, but he was only allowed to speak what God told him to say. In fact, God was granting Balaam's request to see what he would actually do. Because of his greed, Balaam made up his mind to go even though God didn't really want him to. That is why God's anger was aroused when Balaam left to see Balak. But Balaam was so focused on earning his fee that he refused to pay

attention to the talking donkey and the presence of the angel.

After recognizing his sin, Balaam went on to give four prophecies, none of which cursed Israel. Balaam realized that he could not curse people whom God had blessed. Although this story leads us to believe he turned completely to God, later passages in the Bible show that Balaam couldn't resist the temptation of money and idolatry (Num 31:16; 2 Pet 2:15; Jude 1:11). He eventually died in a battle against the Midianites (Num 31:8).

In the New Testament, Peter talked about false teachers and their destructive ways. He described them as "having eyes full of adultery ... enticing unstable souls" (2 Pet 2:14). He wrote that they forsook the right way and followed the way of Balaam.

Donkeys

Donkeys were all-purpose pack animals used for transportation, carrying loads, grinding wheat, and plowing fields. They were usually highly dependable, which explains why Balaam became so angry when his donkey refused to move.



Understanding Your Students

In the story you will be sharing with the students, Balaam was able to hear a direct message from God through the donkey and an angel. The words were plain and simple. No one could have mistaken what God wanted Balaam to do. But we know that this is not a common way for God to communicate with His followers today. That is why many believers often ask how we can really know God's will. It is possible that your students may also ask a similar question: How can they obey God if God doesn't talk to them directly? How will they know what God wants them to do and what God doesn't want them to do?

First, explain to your students that we have been

given direct orders from God that we must always obey. These are the words found in the Bible. These instructions are important even if we haven't heard them directly from God. For example, remind them of God's Ten Commandments. Let your students know that these are rules and instructions that God has given to His people. For us to be considered His own, we must listen to His directions and follow them. We can also remind the students that we need to remember everything Jesus had taught us while He was on earth. He gave us directions on how we should live our lives, and He taught us many stories about people who did or didn't do what pleased Him. Those are good examples for us to learn from. We should always learn from the messages in the Bible, because they are our special instructions from God.



Vocabulary

Curse

to say something bad about another person

Messengers

someone who is giving a person a message, or taking a short trip to run an errand for another person

Bless

to say that good things will happen to another person



Before You Teach

Many characters in the Old Testament communicated directly with God. Abraham and Moses are two examples of people who were able to talk to God on a regular basis. This allowed them to know the will of God and faithfully follow Him. In today's lesson, God also spoke with Balaam—but it didn't strengthen him, nor did it make him any more faithful. Outwardly, it seemed as if he was obedient to God's will because he prophesied that God's people would be blessed, but inwardly, he wanted the riches more than anything else.

Today, many of us wish we could talk to God in a way where we would know His will. It would be so plain and so simple. When we pray to Him and He answers us, there would be no questions as to what to do. But Balaam's example has shown us that it is not so simple. It is only simple when we choose to obey Him, no matter what the answer

may be. We can't hope that the answer will always be the one we want to hear. Otherwise, it would be pointless to even pray to God. Or even if we obeyed God, but did it grudgingly or constantly wishing for a different outcome, knowing His will doesn't help us become more faithful.

Therefore, it really isn't about whether God reveals things to us directly or not. Abraham and Moses were not more righteous and faithful because God spoke to them and let them know what He wanted them to do. It is because they chose to be obedient to His will. The difference between them and Balaam was in the way they responded to God's calling.

In the same way, we should pray to understand God's will. Sometimes, following God's way is not always easy from a human perspective. But many examples in the Bible have shown us that when we choose to be obedient, we will be victorious in the end.



Bible Story

Not long ago, we learned how God helped His people, the Israelites, escape from Egypt. Why did God want the Israelites to escape from Egypt? That's right, because they were slaves there, and God wanted His people to live in a much better place. As the Israelites traveled towards their new land, they experienced many, many miracles. What are some of the miracles they experienced? Yes, the ten plagues while they were still in Egypt and then the crossing of the Red Sea. But it took the Israelites a long time to reach their new and better land because they stopped in many places on the way. Today we are going to learn about one of those places.

The King of Moab Wants to Destroy the Israelites

As the Israelites got closer and closer to their new land, the people living nearby had already heard all about the Israelites and the great miracles they had experienced. They knew there were thousands of Israelites, and that God was with them. After all, God had freed them from Egypt, which was such a powerful country! Then, God had parted the Red Sea for them. The people living in the nearby lands had never heard of such a powerful God before!

So when the Israelites got closer to the land that God had promised them, the people nearby became scared. Why do you think these people were scared? Yes, it's because they knew that if they fought with Israel, they would lose because God was with the Israelites. But they also knew that if they didn't fight, they might lose their land to the Israelites.

One of these nearby places was called Moab, and the people there were very afraid of the Israelites' power. It wasn't just the people of Moab who were afraid, it was also their king! His name was Balak. Balak was very worried and started to think of ways he could beat the Israelites in battle. He didn't want the Israelites to come and take over his land. Finally, he had an idea. He had heard about a wise man named Balaam, who lived in a far away country. So he thought, "Maybe Balaam will come and help me get rid of these people. If this wise man, Balaam, curses the Israelites and says that horrible things will

happen to them, maybe what he says will come true, and I'll be able to beat them in battle." Once he thought of this idea, he sent some important messengers with a lot of money to Balaam.

Balaam Listens to God the First Time

The messengers traveled for a long, long time until they reached the place where Balaam lived. They knocked on his door (teacher can make a knocking sound) and when Balaam answered, they said, "We are sent from Balak, the king of Moab. Our king needs your help in getting rid of some people who have camped near our land. He wants you to come and say that terrible things will happen to them. Then we can beat these people and they will leave. Look at all the money the king will give you if you do this."

Balaam looked at all the money and noticed how shiny it was and thought about all the things he could do with the money. But instead of saying yes right away, Balaam told the messengers, "Stay here overnight, and let me ask God if it is all right. I'll tell you what God says to me in the morning."

The men did as Balaam asked. That night God told Balaam, "Do not go with these men. Do not say terrible things against the Israelites; I plan to bless them and do wonderful things for them."

So the next morning, Balaam told the messengers, "Go back without me. The Lord won't let me go with you."

The King Asks Balaam Again

But King Balak would not take "no" for an answer, so he decided to ask Balaam again. This time, though, Balak sent even more important messengers to Balaam with a great promise of even more money.

When the other messengers arrived at Balaam's house, they told him "The king will make you rich and famous. He will do anything else you want. All he wants is for you to come with us and say that awful things will happen to the Israelites."

Once again, Balaam looked at all the money, and he also thought about how famous he could be, and how he could have anything he ever wanted. Deep in his heart, Balaam wanted to go, but he wanted to look like he cared about God's will. He asked the messengers to stay for a night so that he could see what else God had to say.

That night, God told Balaam that he could go with the men. "But," God warned Balaam, "be sure to say only what I tell you!"

An Angel in the Road

The next morning, Balaam was ready to go. He saddled his donkey and followed the king's messengers. As the donkey clip-clopped along the dusty road, Balaam must have thought about what he would say when he got to Moab. He knew that he would have to say horrible things about the Israelites to make the king happy and get the money he wanted.

God knew what Balaam was really thinking. Balaam wanted to be rich and famous. In his heart, he didn't want to obey God; he wanted to obey the king of Moab! And class, do you think this made God happy? No, God was not happy because Balaam cared more about the money than listening to God.

Even though Balaam didn't have a pure heart, God still wanted Balaam to say only what God told him to say. To do this, God worked a miracle! He sent an angel with a sword to stand in the middle of the road where Balaam was traveling. The amazing part, though, is that only Balaam's donkey saw him! That's right, Balaam didn't see him, nor did his servants—just the donkey!

The donkey wanted to protect Balaam from the angel's sword. To do that, the donkey turned off the road and went into a field. Since Balaam didn't see the angel, he was wondering, "What is my donkey doing?" When the donkey didn't go back to the road, he hit the donkey and yelled, "Get back on the road!" So the donkey listened and began to walk on the road again.

They traveled a little bit further. Then they came to a place where the road passed between two walls. There stood the angel again! This time, the donkey tried to squeeze past the angel by pressing against the walls. This crushed Balaam's foot and made Balaam very angry. "Ouch!" cried Balaam. What do you think he did? Yes, he hit his poor donkey again!

The angel went further down the road and stood in a place so narrow that the donkey couldn't get by at all. The donkey didn't know what else to do, so she just stopped and lay down in the road. This really made Balaam very angry. And what do you think he did? Yes, he hit the donkey for the third time. Then God did something very amazing. He allowed the donkey to talk!

Imagine Balaam's shock when he heard his donkey suddenly say, "What have I done to make you hit me three different times?"

Balaam knew that donkeys didn't talk, but he was so angry that he didn't think about it. He just answered, "Because you've made me look foolish. I'm so angry I wish that I could punish you right now!"

"You've ridden me for many years," the donkey said to Balaam. "Have I ever done this to you before?"

"No," Balaam admitted.

Then God opened Balaam's eyes and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road. He saw that the angel had a sword in his hand. Balaam was very frightened and he bowed low before him.

"I was standing in the road," said the angel. "The donkey saw me even though you couldn't." Then Balaam knew that God had sent the angel to give him an important message.

"When you get to Moab," the angel told Balaam, "you must say only what God tells you to say." After the angel's message, Balaam knew that he had to listen to God. He couldn't obey the king of Moab even though he wanted to.

Balaam Blesses the Israelites

When Balaam finally got to Moab, the king tried again and again to make Balaam say terrible things to frighten the Israelites. Instead, he blessed the Israelites and said the good things that God had told him to say.

How do you think the king of Moab felt? Yes, he was angry because his plan was ruined. Now the Israelites were blessed instead of cursed. "Go home," he told Balaam. "I won't give you any money."

Balaam knew God had planned to do good things for the Israelites. And even though Balaam wanted to do something that God did not like so that he could get rich, God made sure that His will was done in the end. Today's story teaches us to always remember to obey God's will.



Check For Understanding

1. Which king was worried that the Israelites were going to take over his land? (The king of Moab.)
2. Who did the king of Moab send for to speak to the Israelites? (Balaam.)
3. Did Balaam obey God while he was riding on his donkey to speak to the Israelites?

- (No, he was just greedy for money.)
4. Who did God send to stop Balaam? (An angel.)
 5. How many times did Balaam hit his donkey? (3 times.)
 6. What did the angel tell Balaam? (The angel told him he should speak only good things about the Israelites.)
 7. What can we learn from this story? (Always remember to obey God's will.)



Life Application Story

Obeying Mom is Also Obeying God

When Mrs. Lewis opened the door to Tommy's room, she almost fainted. His room was a mess! His socks covered the floor and his schoolbooks were under his bed. Mrs. Lewis even spotted an empty bag of chips on his desk. Needless to say, his room needed a good cleaning, so Mrs. Lewis poked her head out of the room and called out, "Tommy, can you help me do something?"

Tommy wasn't feeling too helpful. His favorite cartoon had just come on. He yelled back impatiently, "What, Mom? Can you please wait? My show is not over yet."

Mrs. Lewis was not happy that Tommy was watching television. Because he watched so much of it, she and Mr. Lewis had decided to limit the times he could watch, and right now was not one of those times.

Once again, Mrs. Lewis called out, "Tommy, you're not even supposed to be watching television now. Can you please clean up your room instead? It is a mess!"

"I know I wasn't supposed to turn on the television, but can I please finish watching this cartoon? Then I promise I'll clean up," Tommy pleaded.

"Tommy, please listen to me and turn off the television. You need to clean up your messy room," Mrs. Lewis said firmly as she walked downstairs.

Tommy pretended that he couldn't hear what Mrs. Lewis was saying and kept on watching the

cartoon show. Mrs. Lewis walked over to the television set and turned it off.

"Tommy, when God looks down from heaven and sees you here watching TV when you're not supposed to and I am asking you to clean up your room, do you think He is happy? Do you think God is saying, 'Wow, that Tommy, he's a wonderful boy?'"

Tommy looked down at the ground. "I guess not," he grumbled.

"Do you remember why Dad and I put a limit on your TV time?" asked Mrs. Lewis.

"Yes, because it takes away time I should be doing other things like my school work."

"Right, and what do you think would make God happy right now?"

"He would want me to listen to you, turn off the TV and clean up my room."

"That's right, Tommy. Do you think you could do that? It would make God and me happy."

Tommy paused for a moment and then hugged his mom.

"I'm sorry, Mom. I'll go clean up my room now, and I'll stick to the plan you, Dad and I agreed on. I know it doesn't always look like it, but I want to obey God."

"I know you do, Tommy. Come on! I'll help you with your room. We can start by throwing out that empty bag of chips on your desk!"

Questions to Think About

1. What did Mrs. Lewis want Tommy to do? (She wanted him to clean up his room and turn off the television set.)

2. **What did Tommy do when Mrs. Lewis called him?** (He made a lot of excuses and also pretended not to hear her.)
3. **Does Tommy want to obey his mom and God and be a good boy?** (Yes, but sometimes it is

hard to do.)

4. **How is obeying our parents the same as obeying God?** (Let students answer.)



Activity 1

What Was Balaam Thinking?

What was Balaam thinking about when he was on the donkey? (He was thinking about making money. He did not listen to God.)



Activity 2

Greedy or Not?

Look at the pictures. How are the children being greedy? Fill in the blanks. He is being greedy by not sharing his _____ (food). She is being greedy by not sharing her _____ (toys). Look at the person standing at the back. How do you think she feels? (Allow students to answer.)



Activity 3

Donkey Clip Puppets

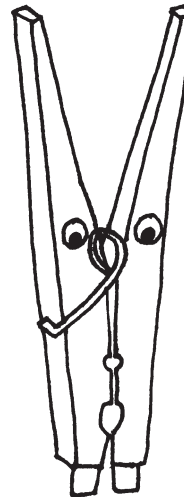
Materials:

1. clothespin (1 per student)
2. wiggly eyes
3. glue
4. white paper
5. scissors
6. brown markers

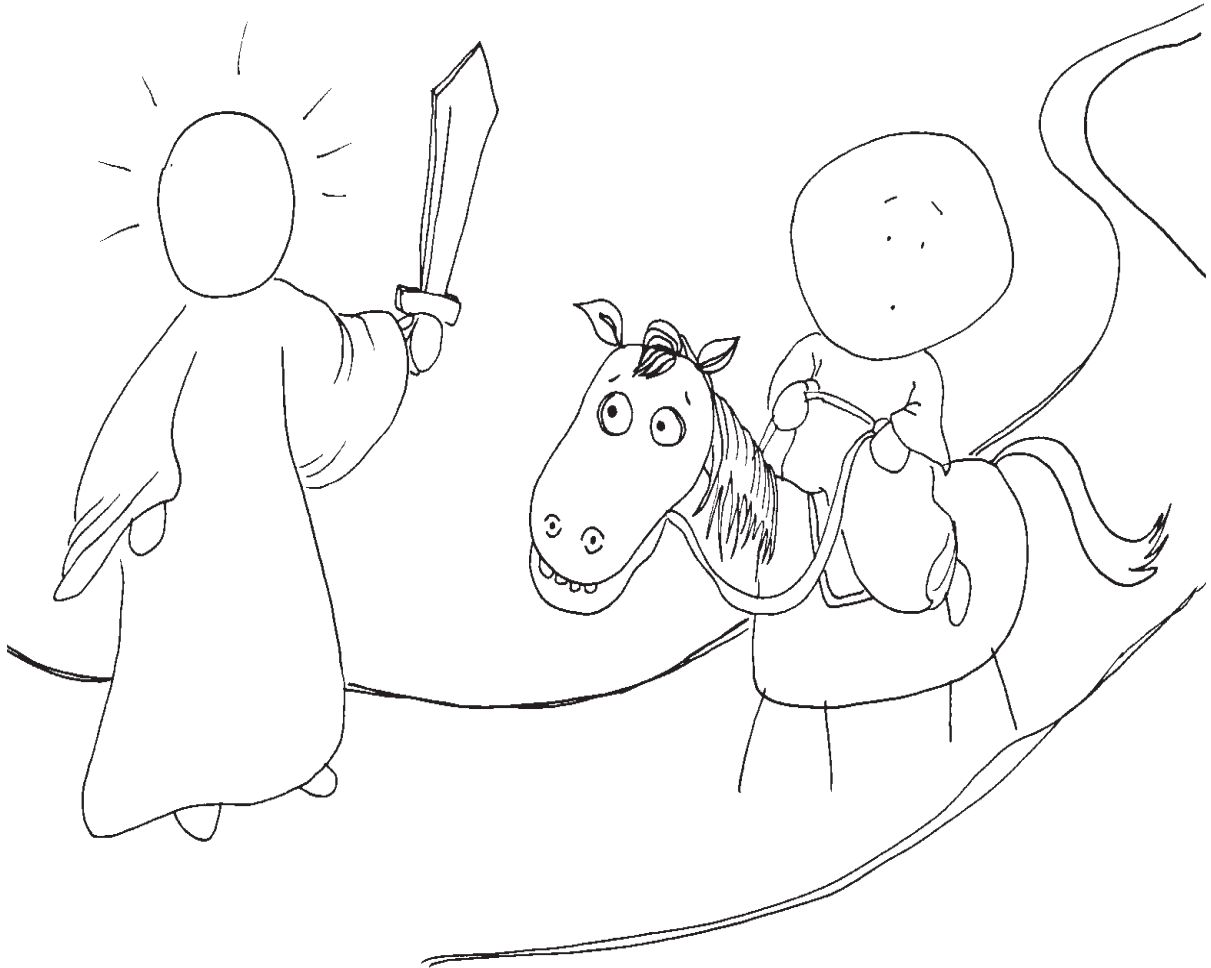
Directions:

1. Give each student a clothespin. Have them color in the pin with a brown marker.
2. Glue the wiggly eyes onto the clothespin near the bottom of the "V".
3. Help students cut out two small rectangular shapes out of the white paper and glue them onto the clothespin as teeth (see diagram).
4. Show the students how the donkey can "talk" by opening and closing the pin.

5. As the students are creating this craft, have them answer the following questions:
 - *Why did God use the donkey to talk to Balaam?
 - *Have you ever heard a donkey talk before?
 - *How would you feel if you heard a donkey talk?
 - *God wants us to listen to Him. In what ways can God talk to us?
6. After the craft, and if time permits, you may wish to ask the students to role play being the donkey, talking to Balaam.



What Was Balaam Thinking About?



What was Balaam thinking about when he was on the donkey? Circle the answer.

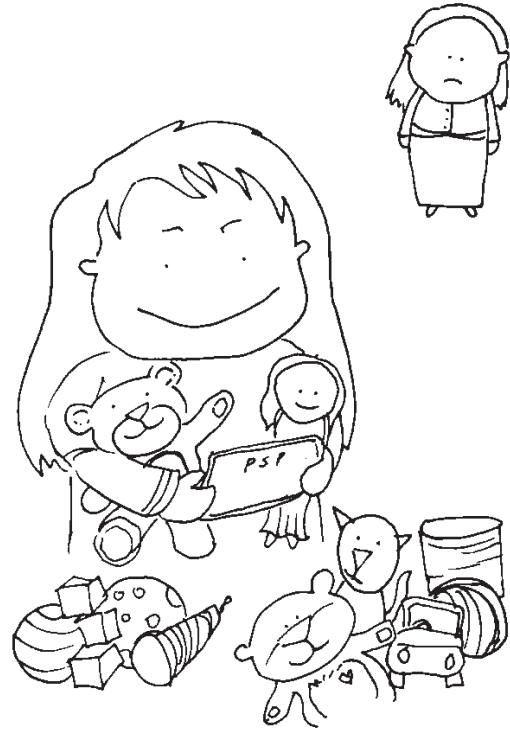
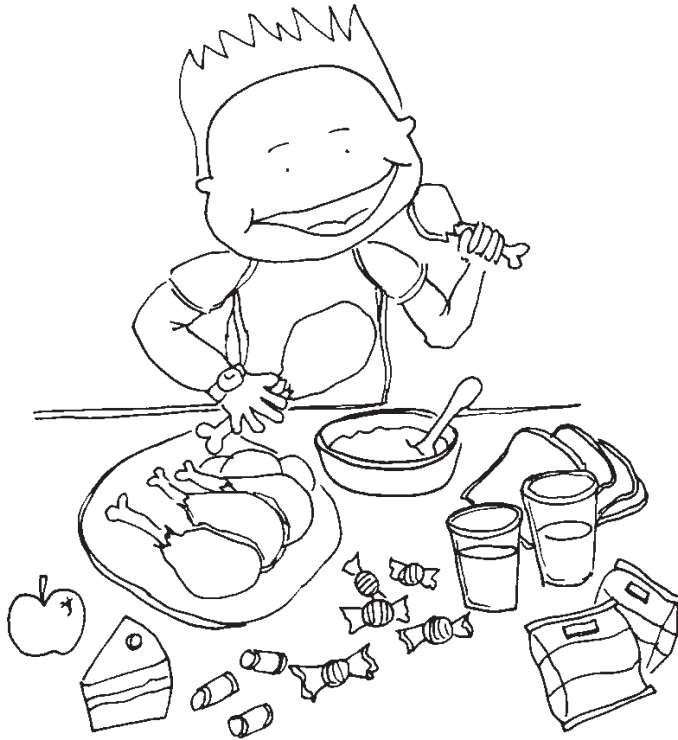
GOD

MONEY

Activity 1:2

Greedy or Not?

Look at the pictures. How are the children being greedy? Fill in the blanks.
Look at the person standing at the back. How do you think she feels?



He is being greedy by not sharing his _____.

She is being greedy by not sharing her _____.