



God Blesses Israel through Balaam

Numbers 22–24



LESSON GOAL

Students will understand that God is sovereign and keeps His promises.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Name Balak's request of Balaam.
- Describe God's response to Balaam's going with Balak's men.
- Explain how God showed mercy to Balaam.
- Discuss how God used Balaam to accomplish His purpose.

KEY VERSE

"If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the LORD, to do good or bad of my own will. What the LORD says, that I must speak" (Numbers 24:13).

APPLICATION

- Serve and obey God in everything you do.
- Check your motives to be sure they are for God's glory.
- Remember that God's blessing is irrevokable.

Symbol Key



Craft



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet



2 Grade Level

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

God’s faithfulness and Israel’s unfaithfulness are contrasted throughout the book of Numbers. In Numbers 22–24, God shows His faithfulness in blessing His people in a most unusual way. God’s faithfulness is made even more amazing in light of the Israelites’ unfaithfulness that follows in Numbers 25. These events at the end of the wilderness wanderings reveal how God’s sovereignty over false prophets, wicked nations, the future, and even Israel means that He can faithfully keep every promise He makes. God is faithful and cannot be unfaithful.

God’s Faithfulness Demonstrated through Israel’s Victories (Num. 21:21–35)

After God punished Israel’s unfaithfulness with fiery serpents, Israel continued on their detour around Edom (Num. 20:14–21). They ended their journey not far from the plains of Moab (northeast of the Dead Sea), Israel’s last major resting place before crossing the Jordan River. The Amorites, Moabites, and Midianites (the nations in the land east of the Jordan), perceived the presence of the Israelites who were camping among them as a threat. Two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og, launched campaigns against the Israelites (21:21–35). The Lord not only gave Israel victory over these kings but also gave them their land! The land conquered was approximately 100 miles long and varied from 20 to 40 miles in width. (The land bordered the eastern side of the Jordan River, stretching from the middle of the Dead Sea in the south to the Sea of Galilee in the north.) While some of the land was still controlled by the Moabites and Midianites, much was now controlled by Israel. These victories were momentous displays of God’s faithfulness to His promises and to His people. God was giving Israel land even before they entered the Promised Land!

God’s Faithfulness Assaulted by Balak’s Plot (Num. 22)

When Israel first entered Moabite land (Num. 22:1), God warned them to not harass Moab because He would not give the Moabite land to Israel (Deut. 2:9). God already had given the land to the Moabites, who were descendants of Abraham’s nephew, Lot. Although Israel did not threaten Moab, Moab unnecessarily felt threatened by Israel. After Israel defeated the Amorites, the Moabites were “sick with dread because of the children of Israel.” Balak, king of Moab, was worried that the more numerous Israelites would conquer Moab and use up its natural resources (Num. 22:4). In desperation, Balak sent elders of Moab and Midian (a people living among them) to the prophet Balaam, who lived in Pethor, a city on the Euphrates River. Balak wanted Balaam, who had a reputation for cursing, to curse Israel so he could defeat them and drive them out.

When the men reached Balaam, Balaam told them he would need to speak with the Lord before giving them an answer (Num. 22:8). Although Balaam used the special name Yawheh for God, Scripture makes it clear that he did not worship

Additional Reference Materials

*The MacArthur Study
Bible* by John MacArthur

God. Instead, Balaam was the epitome of a false prophet (2 Pet. 2:15–16; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14). He probably was going to the god of the people whom he wanted to curse, believing that specific god would have the most power over his own people. That night, Balaam actually spoke to the true God of Israel. God told Balaam that cursing Israel would be impossible because they were blessed (Num. 22:12). Balaam sent the men away. He could not persuade God to curse His people, Israel.

Intent on defeating Israel, Balak sent higher-ranking princes back to Balaam with the promise of honor and whatever else Balaam wanted. Balaam said that regardless of how much Balak offered, he could not go beyond God's Word (Num. 22:18). That night, God gave permission for Balaam to go, but did not give permission to curse the people. Balaam could speak only what God revealed.

Even though God had told Balaam to go, He became angry with Balaam as he went on his journey (Num. 22:22). When the Angel of the Lord came to confront Balaam for his "perversion" (22:32), only Balaam's donkey was aware that the Angel was there. Balaam beat his donkey three times, not knowing that the donkey was avoiding walking into the Angel (22:23–27). Even after God miraculously allowed the donkey to talk to Balaam, Balaam did not realize that the Angel was there (22:28–32). When Balaam finally saw the Angel, the Angel told him that the donkey had saved his life by turning aside (22:33). The Angel repeated God's command to go to Moab but to speak only what God commanded (22:35). The reason for God's anger is not specified except that Balaam's way was perverse before God (22:32). Since the Angel repeated God's command to say only what God said, it's quite possible that Balaam had already changed his mind and planned to curse Israel, perhaps persuaded by Balak's promise of riches (2 Pet. 2:15–16). The warning of the Angel of the Lord convinced Balaam. When he arrived in Moab, he said to Balak, "Have I any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I must speak" (Num. 22:38). God assured Balaam that he would either speak His words or be punished.

God's Faithfulness Upheld in Balaam's Prophecies (Num. 23–24)

First Prophecy (Num. 22:41–23:12)

At the beginning of the next day, Balaam and Balak went to a high place of Baal, a center of worship for a false god. It was located where Balaam could observe all the people (Num. 22:41). Balaam had Balak offer seven bulls and seven rams, one of each on seven altars (Num. 23:1). By pagan standards, this was a perfect sacrifice that would persuade any god to grant the request of the one making the sacrifice. Balaam and Balak were not trying to offer a sacrifice to the true God in faith and repentance. Instead, they thought that the true God could be pleased by wicked men offering sacrifices apart from true devotion.

Balaam went alone to wait for God's word (Num. 23:3). God met Balaam and "put a word in Balaam's mouth." Balaam returned and spoke exactly what God had given. Much to Balak's dismay, Balaam did not curse Israel but blessed them! He said, "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?" (23:7). He also commented on the great number of Israelites: "Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number one-fourth of Israel?" (23:10). Balaam recognized the privileged place that Israel occupied in God's plan and even said, "Let me die the death of the righteous" (23:10). Balaam was so caught up in the magnificence of God's blessing of Israel that he forgot his wickedness for a moment and even desired to be blessed like Israel!

Second Prophecy (Num. 23:13–26)

Although Balak was already quite angry, he desired Balaam to try again, this time at a different location. Perhaps Balak hoped that if Balaam did “not see them all,” he would be better able to convince the God of Israel to curse His people. Maybe God would listen if Balaam were someplace else. Balak apparently had the idea that God was like a man who could be irrationally placated. Again, Balak offered the sacrifices, and Balaam waited alone (Num. 23:15–16).

Balaam returned after God had told him what to speak and again blessed the people. Although Balak had been trying to persuade God to act like a man and change His blessing of Israel, Balaam said, “God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent” (Num. 23:19). He asked, “Has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” God’s blessing of Israel was irrevocable; Balaam could not reverse it with any sorcery or divination (23:20, 23). Because Israel had been blessed by the faithful God, they were unbeatable. Anyone who opposed Israel would be as helpless as a lion’s prey (23:24).

After Balaam blessed Israel the second time, Balak was infuriated. He answered to Balaam, “Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.” Balak wanted Balaam to keep his mouth shut if he couldn’t say anything bad!

Third Prophecy (Num. 23:27–24:14)

Balak still stubbornly hoped that God would change His mind, and he tried to find a place where “it will please God that you may curse them for me from there” (Num. 23:27). The sacrifices were again offered, but this time Balaam “did not go as at other times, to seek to use sorcery” (Num. 24:1). After Balaam looked up and saw Israel, the Spirit of God came upon him. Revealing the extent of His power, the Spirit of God actually spoke through the false prophet.

Not surprisingly, Balaam again blessed Israel. He proclaimed the beauty of Israel, that even now, while encamped on the plains of Moab, Israel was like valleys, gardens, and cedars and aloes planted by the Lord (Num. 24:5–6). Balaam also prophesied about Israel’s future king, whose “kingdom shall be exalted.” God had already promised Israel a king in Genesis 17:6–8; 35:11; 49:10. Balaam confirmed those promises, which ultimately are fulfilled in Jesus. In Verse 9, Balaam, through the Spirit, repeats the same promise that God gave Abraham in Genesis 12:3: “Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you.”

Balak understood that Balaam had just pronounced God’s curse on him since he was one of those who was seeking to curse Israel. Balak’s anger flared up. He warned Balaam to flee since Balaam had “bountifully blessed them these three times” (Num. 24:10). Balaam responded that he had been true to his word. When he arrived, he had told Balak he could not “go beyond the word of the LORD, to do good or bad of my own will” (24:13). God had seriously warned Balaam when he was visited by the Angel of the Lord. Before leaving, Balaam had more prophecies to utter: “Come, I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the latter days” (24:14).

Fourth Prophecy (Num. 24:15–25)

Balaam had prophesied of the coming king in his third prophecy, and he returned to that theme in his last prophecy (Num. 24:17). Although the king was not yet present, Balaam looked to the king’s arrival in the future (24:17a). He referred to the king by two metaphors, the “star” and the “scepter.” God already had promised that “the scepter shall not depart from Judah” (Gen. 49:10). Like the scepter, the star was a symbol of royalty. This is an important, early prophecy of the coming

Messiah. The future king would have dominion over Moab, Edom, and Seir; from “out of Jacob One shall have dominion” (Num. 24:19).

Balaam also prophesied the defeat of surrounding nations (although not particularly at the hands of the coming king; Num. 24:20–25). The Amalekites already had suffered defeat by Israel once, in Exodus 17:8–16. In Numbers 14:44–45, the Amalekites defeated Israel. The animosity between Amalek and Israel would continue until Amalek was destroyed. The second nation was the Kenites, most likely the same people as the Midianites. In Genesis 15:18–19, God promised Abraham that his descendants would own the land of the Kenites. The Kenites ultimately would be defeated by the Asshur, perhaps a reference to Assyria. The last nations mentioned were Asshur and the Eber. (The identity of both is disputed.) They would be defeated by ships coming from Cyprus. While it is difficult to pinpoint when these defeats happened, it is clear that the nations who opposed Israel and Israel’s God ultimately would be defeated by the coming king. The ever-faithful God would not wander from His blessing of Israel; likewise, just as God promised, those who cursed Israel would find themselves cursed.

God’s Faithfulness Spurned by Israel’s Immorality (Num. 25)

Numbers 24:25 ends with Balak and Balaam parting ways and Balaam returning to his home. (Joshua 13:22 says that the Israelites slew Balaam. It is possible that Balaam either returned or had settled near Moab.) Although God had used Balaam to bless Israel, Balaam sought the ruin of Israel when given opportunity. Balaam “taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality” (Rev. 2:14). Moabite and Midianite women invited the people to offer sacrifices and worship the Moabite gods (Num. 25:2). Perhaps Israel had not yet heard about God’s blessing of them through Balaam. Whether they had or not, God already had abundantly shown His faithfulness through 40 years of wilderness wanderings. God also had given Israel victory over a large portion of land east of the Jordan. But Israel responded to God’s faithfulness by worshiping another god. Even Balak appreciated the power of Israel’s God enough to try to persuade Him to curse the people. All Balak had to do was present Israel an opportunity for idolatry, an opportunity to once again show their unfaithfulness.

The Israelites joined themselves to the false god Baal (Num. 25:3) by worshiping him, offering sacrifices, and having sexual relations with the Moabite and Midianite women. God commanded that the offenders be killed, and He sent a plague among the people. Even in the midst of the punishment, an Israelite man blatantly began to have sex with a Midianite woman. The offense was so obvious that Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, saw them engaged in sin, took a javelin, and killed both the man and woman (25:6–8). God honored Phinehas’s zeal for Him and passion for His glory and stopped the plague from spreading (25:10–13). But 24,000 Israelites already had died for their unfaithfulness (25:9).

Conclusion

God showed His faithfulness to Israel in a way that was shockingly powerful. To emphasize His complete control and gracious choice of Israel, God spoke through a wicked, idolatrous sorcerer. The text repeats again and again that Balaam spoke only what God told him to speak. When he considered doing otherwise, the Angel of the Lord confronted him. There was no amount of riches or honor that could convince Balaam to do otherwise. Eventually, the Spirit of God spoke through Balaam. The unusual human instrument emphasizes that these prophecies of Israel’s present and future blessings irrevocably came from God. From idolatry in Egypt, to the idolatry of the golden calf, to the idolatry on the plains of Moab,

Israel had been unfaithful. Yet God had chosen to bless them and could not change His mind (Num. 23:19). Israel was completely unworthy of being blessed, but God had sovereignly placed His affection on them. Because He loved His people, He would not listen to the desire to curse them (Deut. 23:5). God had an awesome blessing for Israel—a great nation, the Promised Land, dominion over the nations, and a king. Because their hearts were hard, they responded to His faithful blessing with unfaithfulness.

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul reveals that Israel's sin and their punishment were recorded "for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor. 10:11). Believers have been blessed to know that the king who was promised to Israel was also the sacrifice for our sins. In view of God's faithfulness and His punishment for unfaithfulness, believers must learn from these examples and be faithful. God's faithfulness demands our faithfulness.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth" (Psalm 78:1).

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.

How did the Israelites respond when they had to take a longer route to the Promised Land?

They became impatient and frustrated. They complained against God.

What did the Israelites complain about?

They complained that there was no food and water and said that God had brought them into the wilderness to die. They also said that they hated the manna God had provided for them.

Had God provided for the Israelites in the past?

Yes. He had provided them with water, manna, and quail throughout their journey in the wilderness.

What was God's response to Israel's sin?

He punished them by sending fiery snakes. Many of the people who were bitten by the snakes died.

Why does God judge sin?

God hates sin. He has to judge sin because He is holy and righteous, and sin deserves punishment.

What did the Israelites do when they saw people dying from the snakebites?

They went to Moses and confessed their sin. They admitted that they were wrong to complain against God and Moses and asked Moses to pray to God on their behalf.

What did God tell Moses to do?

God told Moses to make a snake out of bronze. Moses set this snake up on a pole so the Israelites could see it. God said that those who looked at the snake would live.

What would happen to those who would not look at the bronze serpent?

They would die.

What did the Israelites need in order to be saved?

They needed to have faith in God. They had to listen to His words and believe that everything He said was true.



Faithfulness Sword Drill

Have students race to look up the following verses. The first one to find the verse gets to read it to the class. Lamentations 3:23; 2 Timothy 2:13; Psalm 36:5; Psalm 119:90; 1 Kings 8:20, Jeremiah 23:20; 1 Timothy 3:11; Colossians 1:2; Jeremiah 23:28; Luke 16:10–12.



What's Your Price?

Would you do something wrong for a dollar? How about for \$100? How about for a house full of gold and silver? Today in our lesson, we will learn about a man named Balaam who tried to curse God's people for a house full of gold and silver.



Faithfulness

God is faithful even when we are not. Are there times when people you know have not been faithful? For example, your parents said they would do something but didn't. Or a friend said one thing but did another. Can you list any examples of God being unfaithful? No; we can't because God is always faithful. In today's lesson, God demonstrates His faithfulness to Israel when they are blessed rather than cursed by Balaam.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done” (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students’ understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Reading of the Text

Read Numbers 23:13–20.

Introduction

Have you ever heard of a talking donkey? That would be pretty amazing, wouldn’t it? Well, in today’s lesson, we are going to see just why and where this donkey talked, how it happened, and even what the donkey said. Our lesson will come from the fourth book of the Old Testament, Numbers.

Leadoff Questions

LOQ: Why was the king of Moab afraid of Israel?

Answer: The king of Moab, Balak, had seen how Israel had destroyed the Amorites in Numbers 21:21–35. The Amorites had been feared by many of the surrounding regions. For Israel to be able to destroy them showed that God was with them.

LOQ: What did Balak do because he was afraid?

Answer: He sent messengers to Balaam, who lived on the Euphrates River. He was a diviner. This means that he did magic to tell or try to control the future. A diviner would make animal sacrifices to other gods, hoping that these gods would show him favor and give him whatever he asked. Sometimes a diviner would shake arrows or bones, like dice, and throw them on the ground. Then he would supposedly read the future depending on how the objects landed. He also would try to talk with the spirits of dead people to try to understand the future (1 Sam. 28:7–14). A diviner often would use magic spells called incantations to call down curses on enemies or to call down blessings. For his work of blessing and cursing, the diviner would expect payment.

LOQ: What did Balak want Balaam to do?

Answer: Curse the people of Israel.

LOQ: What did Balak mean when he said “curse this people”?

Answer: Balak wanted Balaam to call down judgment from God on Israel. For example, a curse could sound like this: “May everything you touch be ruined. May your crops never grow, and may all your animals die of sickness. May your children become ill and never grow up to be adults.” Balak wanted Balaam to curse Israel because he wanted them to be destroyed. The king of Moab was an enemy of God and His people, the nation of Israel.

LOQ: What was God’s response when Balaam decided to go with Balak’s advisors?



Answer: He was angry.

LOQ: As a result of His anger, what did the Angel of the Lord do?

Answer: He stood in Balaam's path as an adversary would.

LOQ: What is an adversary?

Answer: An adversary is an enemy—a person who opposes or fights against another. For example, the Bible says that Satan is an adversary of God. Balak, the king of Moab, was the adversary of Israel. Another king in the Bible whom we have studied, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, was an adversary of God's people.

LOQ: If you were walking down a pathway and saw the Angel of the Lord standing in your way, with His sword drawn, what would you do? Would you do what the donkey did?

Answer: Yes. But notice Balaam's response. He took his stick and struck the donkey three times. Balaam could not see what his donkey saw: the Angel of the Lord ready to strike him down with His sword.

LOQ: What do you think would have happened if the donkey had not turned or avoided the Angel of the Lord?

Answer: The Angel would have killed Balaam. God had mercy on Balaam by allowing the donkey to see the Angel of the Lord and turn away from Him. God used the donkey to rebuke or scold Balaam and to save him from being killed.

LOQ: Do you think Balaam could curse Israel?

Answer: No. In Numbers 22:12, God said, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." The Israelites were favored by God. Therefore, no one could curse them. God had promised long ago to give Israel the land of Canaan and to bless these people. There was nothing Balaam or the king of the Moabites could do to change this. God is in control of every word spoken. That is why Balaam said, "I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it" (Num. 23:20). What God has blessed, no man can curse.

Summary

God used Balaam to bless His people. Balak wanted Balaam to curse Israel so that he could destroy them. But God is faithful to His promises. He would not allow Israel to be cursed by Balaam. Instead, Balaam could only bless Israel. In Numbers 24, we see that it is God who determines that Israel is blessed and that Moab is cursed.

Application

The wicked rebel and do things contrary to the way God wants them to be done. What about you? Have you been careful to obey God this week? God places special people in your life, such as your parents and teachers, whom He expects you to obey. Do you do what they ask, or do you do things your own way? Only those who have placed their trust in Jesus Christ can go to Him and ask Him for forgiveness. Remember, Balaam loved money more than he loved being obedient to God. As followers of God, we must love God more than we love money or material possessions.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



Prophetic Passages

Materials: photocopy of "Prophetic Passages" chart on paper for each student, one copy on an overhead transparency

Directions: Pass out a writing utensil and a copy of the "Prophetic Passages" chart to each student. Fill in the boxes as you teach through the four prophecies of Balaam. After the entire chart is filled in, point out to the class that it did not matter whether Balak took Balaam to a different location or made great sacrifices to his false idols. The result was always the same. Israel was blessed bountifully by God because God is faithful to His promises, regardless of how sinful we are.

Teacher Notes

Prophetic Passage	Location	Actions	Result
Num. 22:41–23:12	High places of Baal (22:41)	Sacrificed bulls and rams on seven different altars (23:1–2)	Israel was blessed bountifully (23:11).
Num. 22:13–26	Field of Zophim (23:14)	Sacrificed bulls and rams on seven different altars (23:14)	Israel was blessed again (23:20).
Num. 23:27–24:14	Top of Peor (23:28)	Sacrificed bulls and rams on seven different altars (23:29–30)	It pleased the Lord to bless Israel these three times! (24:1, 9–10)
Num. 24:15–25	Top of Peor (24:15)	Took up his oracle and prophesied (24:15)	He predicted the future Messiah's total dominion and the fall of pagan nations against Israel (15–25).



Talk to the Animals

Materials: pictures or drawings of donkeys

Directions: Show the students the pictures of the donkeys and ask what donkeys sound like. Ask the students whether they have any pets and what they sound like. Ask those who have pets if they have ever heard their pets speaking English. Explain that in today's lesson, they will learn about a donkey that spoke like a person.

Praise and Worship

God Is So Good

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Humble Thyself in the Sight of the Lord

In My Life Lord, Be Glorified

O-B-E-D-I-E-N-C-E

Oh, Be Careful

Rejoice in the Lord Always

Seek Ye First

Trust and Obey

We Will Glorify

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



Talking Donkey

Materials: brown paper lunch bags, donkey paper-bag puppet pattern, crayons or markers, glue, scissors

Directions: Have the students color and cut out the donkey pattern at the back of the lesson. Then glue the pieces onto a paper bag.



Balaam's Donkey

Materials: old sock, gift-wrapping tube (or object of the same shape and size), polyester stuffing, two buttons for eyes or a permanent marker, yarn for the mane, scissors, glue, tape, thread

Directions: Create Balaam's donkey by filling an old sock with polyester stuffing. Form the donkey's mouth by finding the toe of the sock and the heel. Pull thread through the toe to the heel, and pucker the toe to create a mouth. Draw or sew on the eyes and nose. Cut the yarn into pieces, and glue the pieces onto the donkey's head. Cut ears from felt or heavy paper, and glue, staple, or sew them onto the head. Finally, tape the head to the tube.



Tag the Donkey

The goal of this game is for Balaam to tag the donkey. It is similar to the game Marco Polo. Choose one student to be the donkey and one student to be Balaam. Balaam must close his eyes and say, “Come here, donkey—I’ll get you!” and the donkey must reply “Stop or you’ll be cut in two!” While Balaam is trying to find the donkey, the rest of the students can make various animal sounds to distract him.



Balak or Balaam?

Materials: photocopy of work sheet for each student, scissors, glue sticks

Directions: Pass out the work sheet to each student. Direct the students to cut out the six phrases at the bottom of the page and glue them under the correct name.

Use this activity to help the students distinguish the two men in the passage, since their names are so similar.

Answer Key

Balak: king of Moab, wanted to curse Israel, became angry at the prophet

Balaam: false prophet, spoke God's blessing on Israel, became angry with his donkey



“Balaam’s Problem”

Give each student a copy of this work sheet. The students can complete the work sheet in class or work on it at home.



“God Blesses Israel through Balaam”

Use this work sheet to reinforce the key truths of today’s lesson. The work sheet is located at the back of the lesson.



Journal Page: “Blessing or Cursing”

Give each student a copy of the journal page at the back of this lesson. The students can complete the page individually, in small groups, or at home.



God’s Wisdom on Words

Divide the class into groups of 5–8 students. Assign each student one of the following verses to read: Numbers 22:18, 35, 38; 23:5, 12, 16, 19, 26; 24:13. After all the verses are read, ask the group to answer the following questions. Answers are written in italics.

1. How was Balaam restricted in what he could speak or do? (Numbers 22:18, 35; 23:12, 26; 24:13) *Balaam could not speak or do less or more than God told him. He could speak only the words that God spoke to him. He had to do ALL that the Lord spoke. He could not do good or bad on his own will.*
2. Who put a word in Balaam’s mouth? (Numbers 22:38, 23:5, 12, 16) *The Lord.*
3. In what three ways is God different from man, according to Numbers 23:9? *God does not lie. God does not have any need to repent. God is completely faithful to His promises. [Use this opportunity to teach on the immutability of God.]*

Coloring Sheets

Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of the lesson. The students can color the pages in class or take them home to color.



MEMORY VERSE

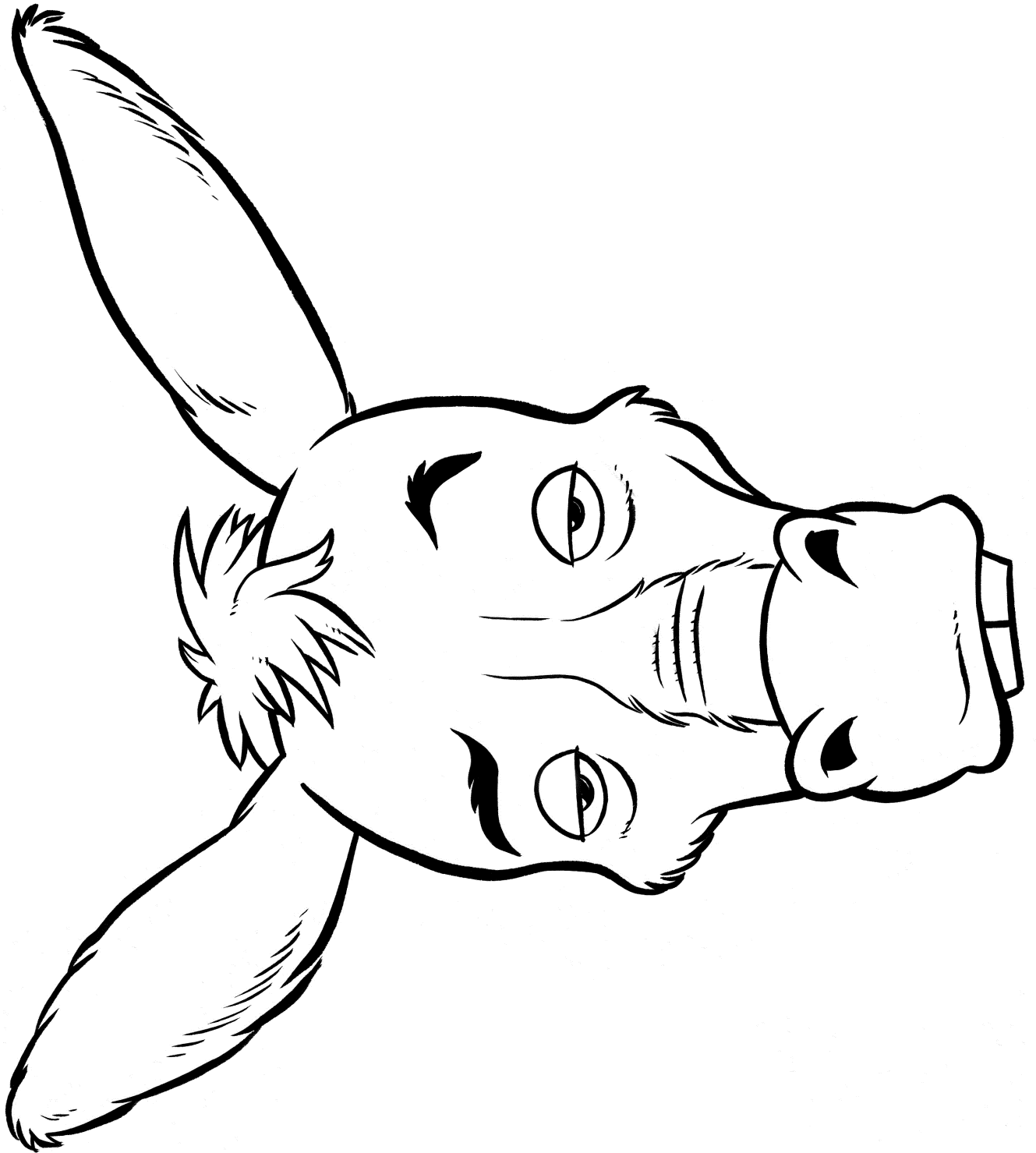
“For His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!” (Psalm 117:2).



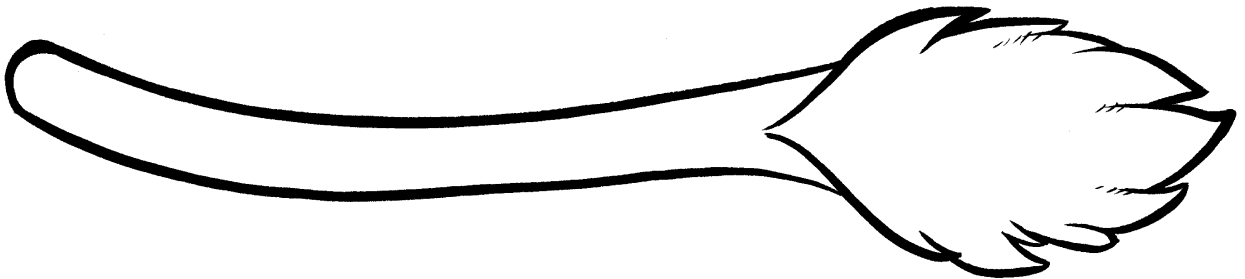
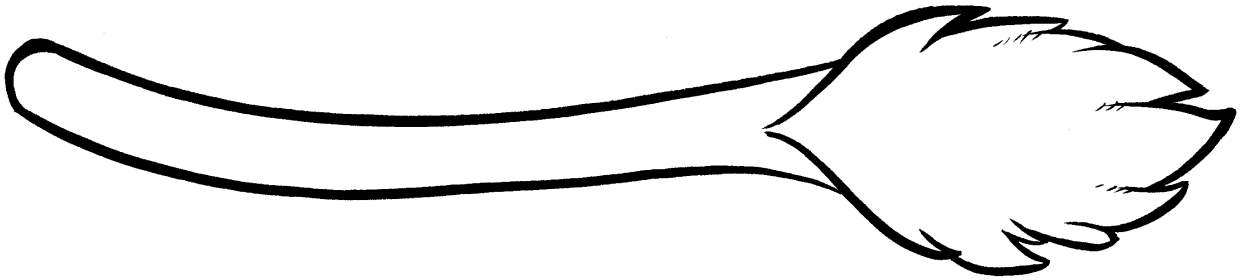
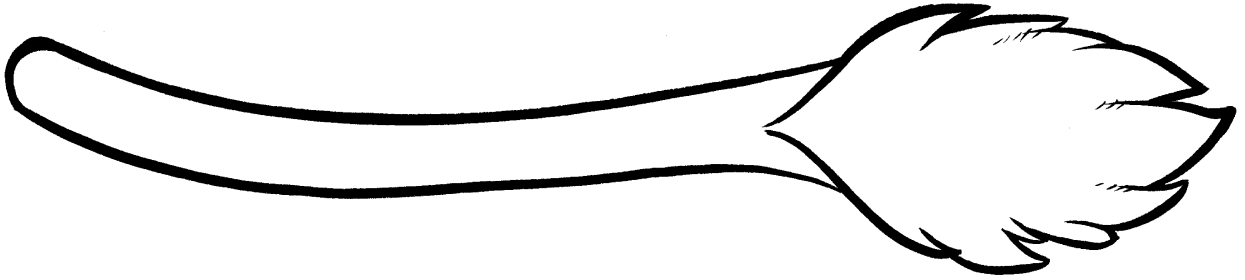
Bible Bounce

After they have learned the verse, have students sit in a circle. Students will take turns bouncing a ball to a person on the opposite side of the circle. Each person who catches the ball should say the next word of the verse. The last person should say the reference. It may be helpful to have the verse on a piece of poster board so that the students can check it if they are uncertain of the words. The verse game can lead into a discussion about God's merciful kindness and how His truth will endure forever.

Donkey Puppet



Talking Donkey



Balak or Balaam?

Balak	Balaam

Directions: Cut out the following six phrases, and glue each one under the name of the person it describes.

False prophet	Spoke God's blessing on Israel
King of Moab	Became angry at his donkey
Wanted to curse Israel	Became angry with the prophet

Balaam's Problem

The story of Balaam in Numbers 22 holds several surprises.
Read the story below, and unscramble the letters in bold print to find out what happened.

Balaam was asked to travel to see the **NGKI** of the **EBOAMTIS**. The **NGKI** needed Balaam's advice on how to deal with the Israelites, who were moving into his country. But God did not want Balaam to go, even though some very important people begged him to make the trip.

Finally, God told Balaam that he could go only if the men asked him one more time, and he was to follow God's strict instructions about what to say and do.

Balaam packed and left early the next morning.

Balaam was riding his **KYDENO**. Suddenly, the animal headed off the **ORAD** and into a **LIEDF**. Balaam tried his best to steer her back onto the **ORAD**, but she moved to one side and crushed Balaam's **OTOF** against the wall they were passing.

This made Balaam angry, and he hit the **KYDENO** with his **FATFS**. But the animal was afraid of something on the **ORAD** that Balaam could not see; it was an **LEGAN**. The **KYDENO** was so afraid that she lay down right in the **ORAD** with Balaam still on her.

After Balaam hit her again, a surprising thing happened. The Lord gave the animal the ability to **KEPAS** to Balaam.

To find out what Balaam's animal had to say, read Numbers 22:28–31.

NGKI = _____ OTOF = _____

EBOAMTIS = _____

KYDENO = _____

ORAD = _____ FATFS = _____

LIEDF = _____ LEGAN = _____

KEPAS = _____

God Blesses Israel through Balaam



Numbers 22-24

Name _____

1. Balak, the king of Moab, asked Balaam to _____ the people of Israel (22:6).

 bless attack

 curse feed

2. Did God allow Balaam to curse Israel? _____

3. Balaam said he could not "go beyond the _____ of the _____" (22:18).

4. Who opened the mouth of Balaam's donkey? _____

5. Why was the Angel of the Lord going to kill Balaam (22:32)? _____

6. Fill in the blanks from Numbers 22:38b.

Balaam said to Balak, "Now, have I any _____ at all to say anything?"

The word that _____ puts in my mouth, that I must _____."

7. God used Balaam to _____ Israel.

Blessing or Cursing

“If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the LORD, to do good or bad of my own will. What the LORD says, that I must speak” (Numbers 24:13).

Would you do something wrong for a dollar? How about for \$100? How about for a house full of gold and silver? Today in our lesson, we learned about a man named Balak who asked Balaam to curse God’s people for a house full of gold and silver. However, God was faithful and would not allow His people to be cursed. In the list below, circle the words of blessing and cross out the words of cursing.

God’s words

Balak’s words

Perverse thoughts

A star shall come out of Jacob

A scepter shall rise out of Israel

Curse them for me

I will honor you greatly if you curse the people

I will give you a household of gold and silver

People often choose evil over good, but God wants you to honor Him in everything you do. You would much rather have His blessing than a household full of gold and silver, wouldn’t you?

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God still blesses His people, and no one can stop His truth. Psalm 117:2 says, "For His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!" How has the Lord blessed you this past week?

The Lord has blessed me by

I will choose His blessing by obeying Him when

God has placed this special person in my life to help me follow Him:

I can choose to obey or disobey this special person. I choose to _____

In the space below, write a prayer thanking God for blessing you with a special person who helps you know about Him.

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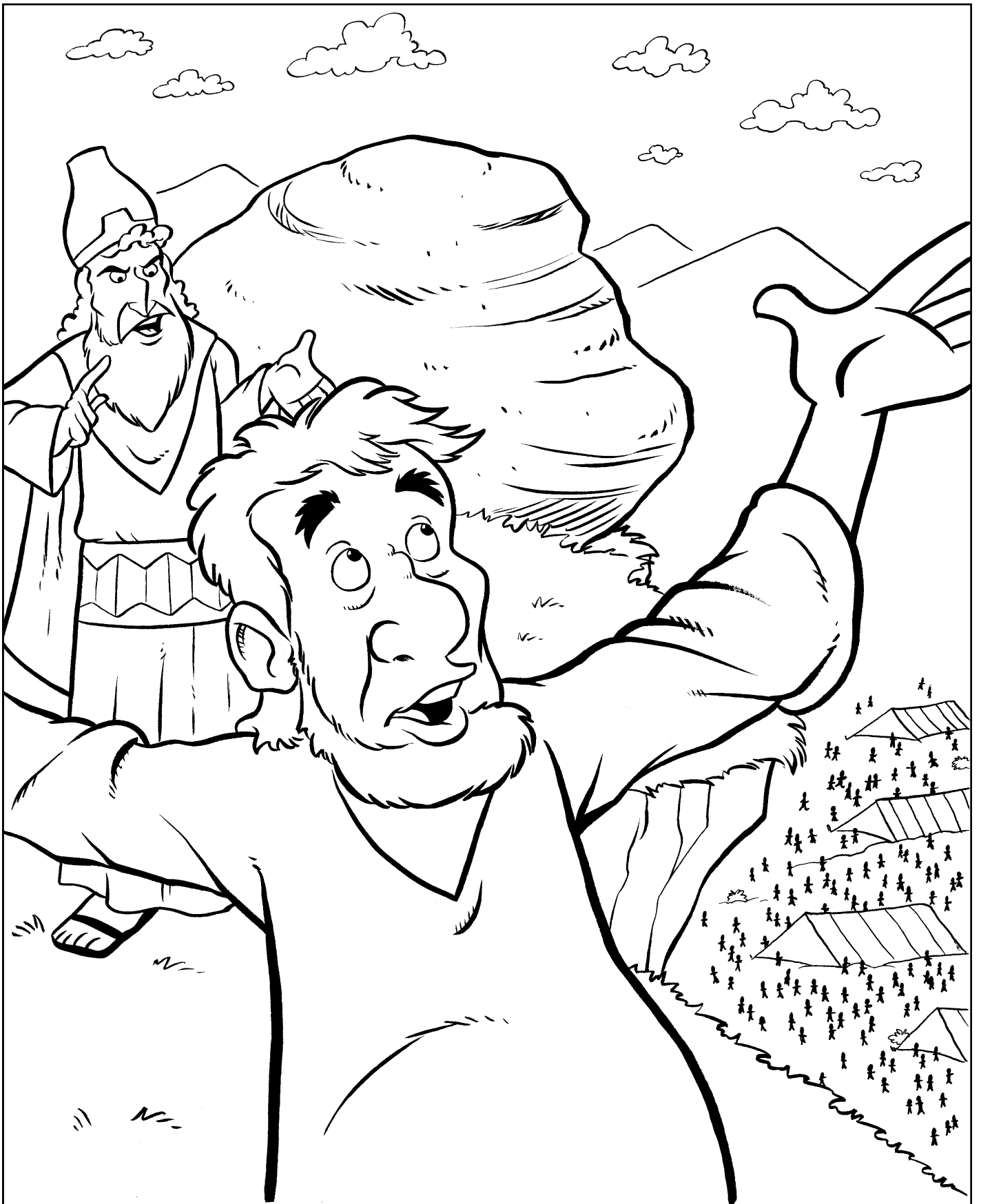
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Balaam's donkey warned him of the Angel of the LORD (Numbers 22:22-33).



So Balak took Balaam up to the high places of Baal so that he could look at Israel and curse them. But God put words of blessings into Balaam's mouth so that he would bless the nation of Israel bountifully (Numbers 22:41; 23:5-12).

