

All God's Creatures Pt 3 - "A Talking Donkey"

Balaam and His Donkey (from Numbers 22 - NLT)

The people of Israel traveled to the plains of Moab and camped east of the Jordan River, across from Jericho. ² Balak... the Moabite king, had seen everything the Israelites did to the Amorites. ³ And when the people of Moab saw how many Israelites there were, they were terrified. ⁴ The king of Moab said to the elders of Midian, "This mob will devour everything in sight, like an ox devours grass in the field!" So Balak, king of Moab, ⁵ sent messengers to call Balaam son of Beor, who was living in his native land of Pethor near the Euphrates River. His message said:

"Look, a vast horde of people has arrived from Egypt. They cover the face of the earth and are threatening me. ⁶ Please come and curse these people for me because they are too powerful for me. Then perhaps I will be able to conquer them and drive them from the land. I know that blessings fall on any people you bless, and curses fall on people you curse."

⁷ Balak's messengers, who were elders of Moab and Midian, set out with money to pay Balaam to place a curse upon Israel. They went to Balaam and delivered Balak's message to him. ⁸ "Stay here overnight," Balaam said. "In the morning I will tell you whatever the Lord directs me to say." So the officials from Moab stayed there with Balaam.

⁹ That night God came... [and] told Balaam, "Do not go with them. You are not to curse these people, for they have been blessed!"

¹³ The next morning Balaam got up and told Balak's officials, "Go on home! The Lord will not let me go with you."

¹⁴ So the Moabite officials returned to King Balak and reported, "Balaam refused to come with us." ¹⁵ Then Balak tried again. This time he sent a larger number of even more distinguished officials than those he had sent the first time. ¹⁶ They went to Balaam and delivered this message to him:

"This is what Balak says: Please don't let anything stop you from coming to help me. ¹⁷ I will pay you very well and do whatever you tell me. Just come and curse these people for me!"

¹⁸ But Balaam responded to Balak's messengers, "Even if Balak were to give me his palace filled with silver and gold, I would be powerless to do anything against the will of the Lord my God. ¹⁹ But stay here one more night, and I will see if the Lord has anything else to say to me."

²⁰ That night God came to Balaam and told him, "Since these men have come for you, get up and go with them. But do only what I tell you to do."

²¹ So the next morning Balaam got up, saddled his donkey, and started off with the Moabite officials.

²² But God was angry that Balaam was going, so he sent the angel of the Lord to stand in the road to block his way. As Balaam and two servants were riding along, ²³ Balaam's donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand. The donkey bolted off the road into a field, but Balaam beat it and turned it back onto the road. ²⁴ Then the angel of the Lord stood at a place where the road narrowed between two vineyard walls. ²⁵ When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it tried to squeeze by and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall. So, Balaam beat the donkey again. ²⁶ Then the angel of the Lord moved farther down the road and stood in a place too narrow for the donkey to get by at all. ²⁷ This time when the donkey saw the angel, it lay down under Balaam. In a fit of rage Balaam beat the animal again with his staff.

[flip over to page 2 to finish story and see questions]

²⁸ Then the Lord gave the donkey the ability to speak. “What have I done to you that deserves your beating me three times?” it asked Balaam.

²⁹ “You have made me look like a fool!” Balaam shouted. “If I had a sword with me, I would kill you!”

³⁰ “But I am the same donkey you have ridden all your life,” the donkey answered. “Have I ever done anything like this before?” “No,” Balaam admitted.

³¹ Then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the roadway with a drawn sword in his hand. Balaam bowed his head and fell face down on the ground before him.

After reading the above story with/to your child/children, ask your child/children these questions while video recording their responses. Feel free to encourage them into more details with appropriate follow-up questions. If your child/children doesn’t/don’t want to (or can’t) answer a question, feel free to skip it. Please record a separate video for each question, as this will help with the size of the files and make it easier to upload/share them with us.

If possible, please record indoors and minimize background noise. Also, sit/stand close to your child so audio is picked up easily. Thanks!

- In the story, Balak (the king of Moab) got scared because he felt like he was surrounded by a huge crowd of strangers. Have you ever been in a large group of people and felt a little worried or afraid? What did you do in that situation?
- Balak wanted Balaam to say something bad about the people of Israel. Do you think it’s easy for people to say mean things about other people when they’re scared? Why or why not?
- Some really important people promised to give Balaam pretty much anything he wanted if he would just lie about what would happen to the Israelite people. What is something you want more than anything else in the world? If someone promised to give it to you if you just told one lie, would it be hard to tell the truth?
- In the story, God gave a donkey the ability to speak in order to get Balaam’s attention! How would you react if God used a talking animal to get your attention? What do you think you would do?

To upload your response videos, visit saalemfirstfriends.org/fifthsundayvideos/ and follow the instructions. If you need help, call the church office at 330.332.0001 or email Pete at petefowler@saalemfirstfriends.org. If you can’t get the website working to upload your videos, we will figure out an alternate way for you to get them to us. (If you’ve already used an alternate method of sharing in the past, feel free to do so again, just make sure to alert Pete.) Thanks for sharing your children with our church family!