

# BALAAM

Balaam can be described as a prophet-for-hire. He was a pagan diviner or sorcerer. Although he called on God to speak blessings over the Israelites, he was reviled as a wicked man. He had some knowledge of God, but he had no devotion to God. He believed he simply received “messages” from the God of Israel. But as a professional sorcerer, he could also receive the power of his prophecies from any god he called upon. With this gift, he often demanded a high wage for his prophecies and curses. As the Israelites were nearing the end of the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, they received the blessing of God they began conquering other kingdoms and expanding their territories. Fearing his kingdom would be next, King Balak of Moab sought to hire Balaam to place a curse on Israel because they had grown too powerful. Balak sent a convoy of messengers with money to pay Balaam to come back with them. But God told Balaam he was not to curse the Israelites. Balak persisted and sent an even larger convoy of more distinguished officials and a promise of even more pay. Again, Balaam heard from God... “Since these men have come for you, get up and go with them. But do only what I tell you to do.” But knowing that Balaam was ultimately going out of his own greed, God became angry:

*<sup>21</sup> So the next morning Balaam got up, saddled his donkey, and started off with the Moabite officials. <sup>22</sup> 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, <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> Then the angel of the Lord stood at a place where the road narrowed between two vineyard walls. <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> 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. <sup>29</sup> “You have made me look like a fool!” Balaam shouted. “If I had a sword with me, I would kill you!” <sup>30</sup> 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. <sup>31</sup> 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.     **-Number 22:21-31**

## APPLICATION

Balaam confessed his sin to the angel of the Lord and pledged to return home if it was not the Lord’s will that he continue. The angel repeated the same instructions Balaam had originally received from God – “Go with these men, but only say what I tell you to say.” This time, Balaam was ready to listen. It only took a message from the mouth of a donkey. When we pray, how much do we listen? Prayer should be a two-way interaction with God. Prayer is not just an opportunity to tell God what we desire of Him. It’s also the time to find out what He desires of us. It’s not only to inform God of our will, but to conform our will to His. God used a donkey that Balaam had ridden all his life to bring new revelation. God speaks to us in quiet times of dedicated prayer and in everyday moments of life if we are listening.

## DISCUSSION/CONTEMPLATION

- Consider your prayers. How much do you listen for God’s desires in our prayers?
  
- Can you recall a time in your life where you felt like God was trying to get your attention?

## D6-CUSSION

Act out the conversation between Balaam and his donkey, take turns switching characters.

- What stands out to you the most?
- What questions do you have?
- What is an application for your life?

## PRAYERS & PRAISE