

Welcome to Sunday School!

Today we start a 3-part series on uncovering the Hidden Blessings in the Strange, Gross and Weird stories in the Bible.

As we know, the Bible is made up of 66 books and that means that there are LOTS of different stories in the Bible. And some that are just plain odd. Before we give up on trying to understand some of the odd ones, let's take a deeper look and see if we can find a Hidden Blessing in these stories – something that makes sense out of the weirdness that we can learn from and apply to our life.

BALAAM'S TALKING DONKEY:

Our first strange story comes from the Old Testament, 1400 years before Jesus was born, from the book of Numbers Chapter 22, verses 1-41.

Balaam lived a long time ago and was a messenger of God. He was thought to have special powers and was summoned by Balak, the king of Moab, to put a curse on the Israelites. Balaam was offered many riches for doing this. Balaam asked God for instructions and was told not to curse the people. But being greedy, Balaam was going to try to curse the people anyway. On the way to meet Balak, Balaam's donkey saw an angel that was trying to stop him, but Balaam didn't. The donkey stopped and Balaam hurt the donkey to try to make him keep going. Finally the Lord "opened the mouth of the donkey." The donkey SPOKE! (The only speaking animal - other than a snake - mentioned in the Bible.) Balaam and the donkey had a conversation and he saw the error of his ways and vowed to say only what the Lord told him to say (see our scripture listed above.) Ultimately, Balaam delivered three blessings, not curses, to the Israelites, and then was dismissed by Balak. Even though he was tempted and made mistakes, Balaam was eventually able to stay true to his faith in God with encouragement from a very strange source - a talking donkey!

God told Balaam to go and do only what God wanted him to do. **We should listen for God's guidance.**

HIDDEN BLESSING:

I think God speaks to us in all sorts of ways and sometimes from very unlikely messengers and uses tools that can be quite surprising. God knows us, and knows that sometimes we tune things out, so God has to get our attention in other - sometimes strange - ways. We should remain open to all things around us, especially animals and nature, to hear what God is trying to tell us. They have unique ways to show us how to treat one another and care for our planet and how to worship God. Sometimes it's the messages that come from unexpected places that impact us the most and bring us blessings.

SCRIPTURE:

Balaam said to King Balak, "I've now come to you. But I am only able to speak whatever word God gives me to say. That is what I will speak."
—Numbers 22:38

ACTIVITIES:

Family Discussion:

1. What are different ways that you communicate with God and that God speaks to you?
2. Why do you think Balaam got upset with his donkey friend? Do you ever get upset with those you love? How do you make peace again?
3. Have you ever had a conversation with an animal? How did that go?

Do an Interview:

Ask someone who knows you, how they see God in you. You might be surprised that you are also a messenger of God for others.

Observe:

Watch and listen to an animal to observe how many ways that they are communicating.

Do Maze on next page:

Help Balaam and his Donkey deliver God's Message.

PRAYER:

Dear God,
Help me to find new ways to listen to you.
Help me to see you all around me. Thank you for helping me uncover hidden blessings in weird stories.
And bless all of the animals.
Let them know they are loved.

Let's pray the Lord's Prayer together:

**Our Creator,
who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those
who trespass against us. Lead us not
into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom and the
power and the glory forever.**

Amen

Bible Pathway
Adventures

MAZE

BALAAM'S DONKEY

"God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people of Israel, for they are blessed."

(Numbers 22:12)

