



Main Idea: Sometimes the problem isn't that God isn't speaking. It's that we're not seeing.

Scriptures: Numbers 22

People love weird stories. Have you ever noticed that? You're sitting with friends, and someone starts telling a story, and then there's a weird twist, something totally unexpected, and suddenly everyone leans in. Phones go down. Conversations stop. You're like, "*Wait...what happened next?*" Something about weird grabs our attention. Sometimes we think the Bible is just history and theology, and it is that. But it's also full of stories that are surprising, unexpected, and honestly, kind of weird. And that's okay. God isn't afraid to include the weird stuff. Because real life can be weird. Some of you are weird. I'm definitely weird.

[Leader Note: Share a quick personal weird story here.]

So, today we're kicking off a new series called **Weird Stories in the Bible**. We're going to look at a few stories that might make you go, "*Wait...that's actually in the Bible?*" And here's the thing: we're not just looking at them because they're weird. We're looking at them because God has something to say to us through them. Today's story is one of the strangest: a prophet and his talking donkey. Yep, you hear that right. Talking. Donkey.

In the Old Testament book of Numbers, we're introduced to a guy named Balaam. Now, right away, this is important: Balaam is not the hero of the story. He was a prophet, but not a good one. In fact, most people would call him a false prophet. He had a reputation for using his prophetic gifts in exchange for money. The New Testament even called him out for loving "*the wages of wickedness*" (**2 Peter 2:15, NIV**). So yeah, Balaam was not exactly a role model. But here's what was interesting...God still spoke to him. God still used him to say true things about His people, Israel. And this should tell us something: God can work even through messy, broken people.

So, at the time of Balaam, there was a king named Balak, who was king of Moab. He was terrified of Israel because they had been winning battles and growing in number. He looked at them and thought, "*We're next.*" So,

instead of going to battle against Israel right away, he tried something different. He decided to hire Balaam to curse Israel.

² Now Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, ³ and Moab was terrified because there were so many people. Indeed, Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites. ⁴ The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, “This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field.” So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, ⁵ sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the Euphrates River, in his native land. Balak said: “A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. ⁶ Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that whoever you bless is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed.” **(Numbers 22:2-6, NIV)**

Basically, King Balak was like, “If I can’t beat them physically, maybe I can take them down spiritually.” And he offered Balaam a lot of money to do it. So, Balaam heard the offer, and honestly, he was interested. But he tried to make it sound spiritual. He was like, “Alright, let me check with God first.” And God made it very clear: “Do not go with them. Do not curse these people, because they are blessed.”

¹² But God said to Balaam, “Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed.” **(Numbers 22:12, NIV)**

That should’ve been the end of the story, right? It should have been, but it wasn’t. But King Balak didn’t give up. He sent back more officials to Balaam, who were more important and more impressive, who basically said, “Name your price.” The offer got bigger. The pressure got higher. And this time, God allowed Balaam to go, but with one condition: “You can go, but you only say what I tell you to say.”

So, the next morning, Balaam got up, saddled his donkey, and head out. And this is where things took a turn. On the road, God sent an angel to stand in Balaam’s path, but Balaam couldn’t see it. And weirdness was incoming: His donkey could see the angel. The donkey saw the angel standing there with a drawn sword, blocking the path, so it swerved off the

road. Balaam was like, *“What are you doing?”* and he hit the donkey to get it back on track.

Back on the road, they kept going. The angel showed up again. This time, the donkey pressed up against a wall to avoid it, and crushed Balaam’s foot in the process. Now Balaam was really mad. He hit the donkey again. And they kept going. Next, for the third time, they were on a narrow path, when the angel appeared. But there was nowhere to go, so the donkey just lay down. And Balaam lost it. He began to beat the donkey again. And then, here comes the weirdest part of the story: God opened the donkey’s mouth and it spoke to Balaam. It was like, *“What have I done to you? Why are you hitting me?”*

²⁸ Then the Lord opened the donkey’s mouth, and it said to Balaam, “What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?” (Numbers 22:28, NIV)

And somehow, this could be even crazier, Balaam just started arguing back to the donkey, like this was just a normal Tuesday. No pause.

No, *“Wait...my donkey is talking?”* Just full conversation between them. And with that, God opened Balaam’s eyes, and he finally saw what the donkey had seen the entire time, an angel standing in the road with a sword drawn. And the angel told Balaam straight up: *“If your donkey hadn’t stopped, you’d be dead right now.”*

³² The angel of the Lord asked him, “Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. ³³ The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared it.” (Numbers 22:32-33, NIV)

Think about that for a second. The one who’s supposed to be the “spiritual one” couldn’t see what God was doing. But the donkey could. The prophet was blind, and the donkey had more awareness than he did. And the angel reminded Balaam again: *“You will only say to King Balak what God tells you to say.”* It’s weird. It’s funny. But it’s also communicating something really important.

Here are a few key things this weird story shows us...

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