

## Sunday school lesson – Upper Primary

<b>BIG IDEA</b>	The God who works for his people behind the scenes
<b>Bible Reading</b>	Numbers 22-24
<b>Preparation</b>	<p><b>Read Numbers 22-24</b> The Israelites are now on the verge of entering the promised land. The attention shifts away from what they are doing and focusses on a Moabite king (Balak). He was rightly afraid of the Israelites and summons supernatural help through Balaam. The incident with the talking donkey vividly illustrates how foolish it is to try and thwart God’s plans, particularly when it comes to hurting his people (2 Peter 2:15). There is heavy irony throughout the incident – a prophet, renowned for his insight, cannot see what a donkey can see! Despite this encounter, Balaam continues to try and manipulate God into doing what he wants (probably what the sacrifices are about). But God is committed to his people and cannot be turned from being on their side. There is no indication that the Israelites were aware that any of this was going on at the time (reminiscent of Job). When it was later revealed to them, the fact that their God was committed to fighting on their side, even when they were unaware there was a battle going on, must have been a huge encouragement as they faced their various challenges.</p> <p><b>Take home message:</b> <i>God fights on the side of his people – even when we can’t see it.</i></p> <p><b>Prepare for “Getting Started”:</b> Find a picture of an animal (e.g. lion) creeping up on unsuspecting prey.</p>
<b>Getting Started</b>	<p>Show a picture of an animal (the prey). If possible, hide the animal stalking them. Talk about what they might have done that day, and what they are doing now. Show the animal that is stalking them. What is the danger? Does the first animal know about it? What are they thinking about (lunch?). What do you think will happen?</p> <p>Today we will find out about a time when God’s people were in a situation a bit like this, facing terrible danger but unaware of it.</p>
<b>Finding Out</b> 1. The unseen threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Recap last lesson: <i>Q: What happened to the Israelites after they complained yet again? What did God tell Moses to do? What happened to people who looked at the snake? What did Jesus say that was a picture of?</i></li> <li>➤ The Israelites carried on their journey to their new home. Finally, they made it back to the edge of the promised land. They camped on one side of the Jordan. They could see the promised land on the other side.</li> <li>➤ While they were camped there, something was happening nearby that they knew nothing about...</li> </ul> <p><b>Read Numbers 22:1-7</b> (Could read in parts – Balaam, Balak, God and Moabites)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Q: Why did King Balak send for Balaam? What did he want him to do?</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Read Numbers 22:8-14</b> (Could read in parts – Balaam, Balak, God and Moabites)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Q: What was God’s answer to Balaam’s question? What reason does he give?</i></li> <li>➤ Despite all the Israelites’ failings, God had chosen to bless them. Because he had chosen them, nothing could change his commitment to them.</li> </ul>

<p>2. The unseen protection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Q: What does that tell you about God?</i></li> <li>➤ Balak wasn't happy with this response, so he sent more important people and lots more money to persuade Balaam. Balaam agreed to go with them in the end, despite God's clear instruction that he wasn't to go.</li> </ul> <p><b>Read Numbers 22:21-35</b> <i>(Could read in parts – Balaam, donkey, angel)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Q: What do you find strange about this incident?</i></li> <li>➤ A donkey could see more clearly than the prophet (someone who was known for being able to "see" things)! By using the donkey, God clearly showed how foolish Balaam's behaviour was – he wasn't even as smart as a donkey!</li> <li>➤ Balaam tried to get around what he knew God wanted and do his own thing – that is always foolish!</li> <li>➤ Remember, that the whole time this was happening, the Israelites had no idea about the danger they were in (Refer back to "Getting Started" activity).</li> </ul> <p><b>Read Numbers 23:1-12</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Q: What was God's response to Balak's request to curse the Israelites (v.11)?</i></li> <li>• <i>Q: Has God said something similar to verse 10a to someone in the past?</i></li> <li>➤ God made a promise to Abraham and his descendants. Because of that promise, God was committed to being on the side of the Israelites. God never changes his mind and never lies. The promises he makes to his people can never be broken</li> </ul> <p><b>Read Deuteronomy 23:4-5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Q: What further reason is given here for why God chose to protect his people?</i></li> <li>➤ God is on the side of his people because he has made an unbreakable promise to them, and because he loves them - no matter what comes against them.</li> <li>➤ Balak asked Balaam 2 more times to curse the Israelites. Each time, the same thing happened. God made sure that the Israelites were blessed instead of cursed</li> <li>➤ Remember that the Israelites were still unaware of what was happening on the hills above them. Danger threatened them, God protected them from that danger, and they carried on eating their lunch! (Refer back to "Getting Started" activity – the difference in this case was that they were also rescued without them knowing about it!)</li> </ul>
<p><b>So What?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Q: Has God's attitude towards his people changed?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Q: What does that mean for how he feels about you, if you are trusting him?</i></li> <li>➤ God is completely committed to being on your side, because he has promised that he will be, and because he loves you - no matter what happens.</li> <li>➤ If you are not yet trusting God, this is what you are missing out on!</li> <li>➤ <i>Q: Do you think we are always aware of the dangers threatening us? (Possibly talk about spiritual warfare and the way Satan would like to get at us)</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Q: How does knowing that God is fighting for you, even when you are not aware of it, make you feel? How does it help you to be brave in living for him?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Memory Verse</b></p>	<p><i>John 3:15</i> Everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.</p>

## Sunday school lesson – Lower Primary

<b>BIG IDEA</b>	The God who works for his people behind the scenes
<b>Bible Reading</b>	Numbers 22-24
<b>Preparation</b>	<p><b>Read Numbers 22-24</b> The Israelites are now on the verge of entering the promised land. The attention shifts away from what they are doing and focusses on a Moabite king (Balak). He was rightly afraid of the Israelites and summons supernatural help through Balaam. The incident with the talking donkey vividly illustrates how foolish it is to try and thwart God’s plans, particularly when it comes to hurting his people (2 Peter 2:15). There is heavy irony throughout the incident – a prophet, renowned for his insight, cannot see what a donkey can see! Despite this encounter, Balaam continues to try and manipulate God into doing what he wants (probably what the sacrifices are about). But God is committed to his people and cannot be turned from being on their side. There is no indication that the Israelites were aware that any of this was going on at the time (reminiscent of Job). When it was later revealed to them, the fact that their God was committed to fighting on their side, even when they were unaware there was a battle going on, must have been a huge encouragement as they faced their various challenges.</p> <p><b>Take home message:</b> <i>God fights on the side of his people – even when we can’t see it.</i></p> <p><b>Prepare for “Getting Started”:</b> Find a picture of an animal (e.g. lion) creeping up on unsuspecting prey. For the story, nominate children to act out the roles of Balak, Balaam, messengers, donkey and angel. Other children could be Israelites.</p>
<b>Getting Started</b>	<p>Show a picture of an animal (the prey). If possible, hide the animal stalking them. Talk about what they might have done that day, and what they are doing now. Show the animal that is stalking them. What is the danger? Does the first animal know about it? What are they thinking about (lunch?). What do you think will happen?</p> <p>Today we will find out about a time when God’s people were in a situation a bit like this, facing danger but not knowing about it.</p>
<b>Finding Out</b> 1. The unseen threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ We’ve been learning about how God looked after his people while they were in the desert. He gave them food and water and promised to be with them</li> <li>➤ <i>Q: What did God’s people do? God sent snakes and some of the people were bitten and became sick. What did God tell them they needed to do to be rescued? What happened to the people who looked at the metal snake? God rescued anyone who trusted him and looked at the snake.</i></li> <li>➤ God’s people carried on their journey to their new home. Finally, they were almost there. They could see it, just over the river. <i>(Act out Israelites setting up camp and having dinner)</i></li> <li>➤ But now there was another problem (one they couldn’t see)! There was somebody was afraid of them and wanted to get rid of them. He was a powerful king, called Balak. <i>(Act out Balak looking fierce behind the backs of the Israelites).</i></li> <li>➤ Balak called for messengers and sent them find a man called Balaam <i>(Act out)</i></li> <li>➤ The messengers travelled a long way, and eventually found Balaam <i>(Act out)</i></li> </ul>

<p>2. The unseen protection</p>	<p>➤ They asked Balaam to come and help get rid of God’s people. Balaam said he would have to ask God first. <i>(Act out Balaam asking God)</i>. This is what God said</p> <p><b>Read Numbers 22:12</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Q: What was God’s reply to Balaam?</i></li> <li>➤ God didn’t want Balaam to do anything to hurt his people. He loved his people and had promised to be with them and look after them.</li> <li>• <i>Q: Do you think Balaam obeyed God?</i></li> <li>➤ No, he didn’t! <i>(Possibly explain that there were 3 visits by messengers)</i>. He went with the messengers back to King Balak.</li> <li>➤ On the way back, a very strange thing happened. <i>(Act out the donkey stopping Balaam from running into the angel with the sword, 3 times – probably best to have Balaam walking beside the donkey!)</i></li> <li>➤ Balaam couldn’t see the angel, but the donkey could! The donkey was smarter than Balaam!</li> <li>➤ Balaam was very angry that the donkey kept stopping him. So angry that he hit the donkey <i>(maybe don’t act that out!)</i></li> <li>➤ Then something even stranger happened! The donkey spoke!</li> </ul> <p><b>Read Numbers 22:28</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Q: How would you feel if a donkey started talking to you?</i></li> <li>➤ Balaam didn’t seem to be surprised – he just started talking back to the donkey!</li> <li>➤ Then, God made Balaam see the angel with the sword standing in his way, and then he knew that the donkey had saved his life!</li> </ul> <p><b>Read Numbers 22:35</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ God told Balaam, he could continue his journey, but he wasn’t allowed to say anything mean against God’s people. He could only say the things God told him to say. Nothing else.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ So, Balaam and the messengers (and the donkey) continued on to see King Balak</li> <li>➤ King Balak said to Balaam, “Where have you been? I have been waiting for you so you can get rid of these people for me” <i>(pointing to Israelites, who are still unaware of what is happening)</i>.</li> <li>➤ But, instead of hurting God’s people, Balaam did the opposite! He blessed them instead (he said that God was with them and would keep his promised to them).</li> <li>➤ God was protecting his people, while they just sat eating their lunch! (Relate back to Getting Started activity – but as well as not knowing about the danger, it’s like the animal was also rescued without it knowing).</li> </ul>
<p><b>So What?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Q: Do you think God still cares for and looks after his people?</i></li> <li>• <i>Q: Do you think there might be times God has looked after you when you haven’t known about it?</i></li> <li>➤ God loves his people. He has promised he will always care for them, and God always keeps his promises. Even when we can’t see it, God is caring for his people</li> </ul>
<p><b>Memory Verse</b></p>	<p><i>John 3:15</i>  Everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.</p>

## Sunday school lesson – Pre-School

<b>BIG IDEA</b>	The God who works for his people behind the scenes
<b>Bible Reading</b>	Numbers 22-24
<b>Preparation</b>	<p><b>Read Numbers 22-24</b> The Israelites are now on the verge of entering the promised land. The attention shifts away from what they are doing and focusses on a Moabite king (Balak). He was rightly afraid of the Israelites and summons supernatural help through Balaam. The incident with the talking donkey vividly illustrates how foolish it is to try and thwart God’s plans, particularly when it comes to hurting his people (2 Peter 2:15). There is heavy irony throughout the incident – a prophet, renowned for his insight, cannot see what a donkey can see! Despite this encounter, Balaam continues to try and manipulate God into doing what he wants (probably what the sacrifices are about). But God is committed to his people and cannot be turned from being on their side. There is no indication that the Israelites were aware that any of this was going on at the time (reminiscent of Job). When it was later revealed to them, the fact that their God was committed to fighting on their side, even when they were unaware there was a battle going on, must have been a huge encouragement as they faced their various challenges.</p> <p><b>Take home message:</b> <i>God fights on the side of his people – even when we can’t see it.</i></p> <p><b>Prepare for “Getting Started”:</b> Find a picture of an animal (e.g. lion) creeping up on unsuspecting prey. For the story, nominate children to act out the roles of Balak, Balaam, messengers, donkey and angel. Other children could be Israelites.</p>
<b>Getting Started</b>	<p>Show a picture of an animal (the prey). If possible, hide the animal stalking them. Talk about what they might have done that day, and what they are doing now. Show the animal that is stalking them. What is the danger? Does the first animal know about it? What are they thinking about (lunch?). What do you think will happen?</p> <p>Today we will find out about a time when God’s people were in a situation a bit like this, facing danger but not knowing about it.</p>
<b>Finding Out</b> 1. The unseen threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ We’ve been learning about how God looked after his people while they were in the desert. He gave them food and water and promised to be with them</li> <li>➤ <i>Q: Did his people say thank you to him? What did they do instead? God sent snakes and some of the people were bitten and became sick. What did God tell them they needed to do? What happened to the people who looked at the metal snake? God rescued anyone who trusted him and looked at the snake.</i></li> <li>➤ God’s people carried on their journey to their new home. Finally, they were almost there. They could see it, just over the river. <i>(Act out Israelites setting up camp and having dinner)</i></li> <li>➤ But now there was another problem (one they couldn’t see)! There was somebody who didn’t want them to get to their new home. He was a powerful king, called Balak. <i>(Act out Balak looking fierce behind the backs of the Israelites).</i></li> <li>➤ Balak wanted to get rid of God’s people, so he called for some messengers and sent them find a man called Balaam <i>(Act out)</i></li> </ul>

2. The unseen protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The messengers travelled a long way, and eventually found Balaam (<i>Act out</i>)</li> <li>➤ They asked Balaam to come and help get rid of God’s people. Balaam said he would have to ask God first. (<i>Act out Balaam asking God</i>). This is what God said</li> </ul> <p><b>Read Numbers 22:12</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ God didn’t want Balaam to do anything to hurt his people. He loved his people and had promised to be with them and look after them.</li> <li>• <i>Q: Do you think Balaam obeyed God?</i></li> <li>➤ No, he didn’t! He went with the messengers back to King Balak.</li> <li>➤ On the way back, a very strange thing happened. (<i>Act out the donkey stopping Balaam from running into the angel with the sword, 3 times – probably best to have Balaam walking beside the donkey!</i>)</li> <li>➤ Balaam couldn’t see the angel, but the donkey could! The donkey was smarter than Balaam!</li> <li>➤ Balaam was very angry that the donkey kept stopping him. So angry that he hit the donkey (<i>maybe don’t act that out!</i>)</li> <li>➤ Then something even stranger happened! The donkey spoke! He said, “What have I done? Why are you hitting me?” (<i>Act out</i>)</li> <li>• <i>Q: How would you feel if a donkey started talking to you?</i></li> <li>➤ Balaam didn’t seem to be surprised – he just started talking back to the donkey!</li> <li>➤ Then, God made Balaam see the angel with the sword standing in his way, and then he knew that the donkey had saved his life!</li> <li>➤ God told Balaam, he could continue his journey, but he wasn’t allowed to say anything mean against God’s people. He could only say the things God told him to say. Nothing else.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ So, Balaam and the messengers (and the donkey) continued on to see King Balak</li> <li>➤ King Balak said to Balaam, “Where have you been? I have been waiting for you so you can get rid of these people for me” (<i>pointing to Israelites, who are still unaware of what is happening</i>).</li> <li>➤ But, instead of hurting God’s people like King Balak wanted him to, Balaam did the opposite! God made him do something that helped his people!</li> <li>➤ God was protecting his people, while they just sat eating their lunch! (Relate back to Getting Started activity – but as well as not knowing about the danger, it’s like the animal was also rescued without it knowing).</li> </ul>
<b>So What?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Q: Do you think God still cares for and looks after his people?</i></li> <li>➤ God loves his people. He has promised he will always care for them, and God always keeps his promises. Even when we can’t see it, God is caring for his people</li> </ul>
<b>Memory Verse</b>	<p><i>John 3:15</i>  Everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.</p>