



# Faith Adventures for Children Together



Free to use – please acknowledge when using beyond local church children's and youth work so others can find and use the resource themselves.

*Committed to URC Children Together:  
enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus  
together in the home, church and beyond.*

For guidance on the purpose of the resource and how to use it as a launch pad for your engagement with children and families, please use this link: [www.bit.ly/FACT-how-to-sheet](http://www.bit.ly/FACT-how-to-sheet)

## Title: Numbers 22: 21–35

**Theme:** The unexpected voice

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### Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning?

#### Fantastic Beasts Introduction

The Bible is full of a fascinating variety of stories: family dramas and heroes overcoming unlikely odds; songs and poetry; historical sagas – not to mention some surprisingly ordinary situations described in Jesus' parables! But not all of these fabulous tales are about humans and their relationship with the God who created them – sometimes humans don't get a look in! The Bible is full of stories and songs which delight in the created world and the animals that are a part of it. We are often reminded not to underestimate animals or the wonderful world that we share with them.

We continue to explore our theme of 'Fantastic Beasts' with a story from the Old Testament about a talking donkey.

The donkey belonged to Balaam. Balaam was a prophet – but he wasn't an Israelite. He was hired by King Balak of Moab to curse the Israelites because the king was afraid of Israel's growing numbers and power.

God was not happy about this! But, rather than talk to Balaam directly, he spoke through Balaam's trusty donkey – after getting the donkey to try to show Balaam that what he was doing was wrong and dangerous.

This story has everything – a fantastic beast, an obstinate man, an angel, and God himself.

It shows how God will do anything to be heard, and will keep trying, even though we sometimes ignore what God is saying – or try to.

The passage does include themes of animal cruelty and domestic violence, so do not use if you are aware of abuse, and be prepared for disclosures and ensure you know the procedures for safeguarding in your context.

Even when animals, or humans, are doing things we don't like we should never hit them. That doesn't mean we can't confront them about their behaviour, but we should not resort to violence.

## Together – prayer and games

How do I help my group to come together and get started with the theme?

### Gathering prayer

#### **Jesus, our friend,**

(use alternate index fingers to point and tap the middle of opposite palms)

#### **Be with us today**

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move up and down twice)

#### **As we share together,**

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move one forward and one back and alternate twice)

#### **Pray together,**

(hands together, palm against palm, as though praying)

#### **Play together,**

(hands to each side, palms up, make two small circles outwards)

#### **And get to know you better**

(point up with one hand)

#### **As children together in your family.**

(one hand out, palm down in front of you, move it sideways and up in three 'steps' as though to indicate children of three different heights)

#### **AMEN.**

(two thumbs up, and bring fists slowly together to meet in front of you)

OR

**Thank you, God, for bringing us together today.**

**Help us to grow closer to you in all we do.**

**Help us to speak and to listen, to learn and to grow together,**

**adventuring together with you wherever we may go.  
Amen**

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### Active Game – Hearing the voice

*You will need:*

- a scarf or something similar to use as a blindfold

Remind the children that, in the story, Balaam heard God's voice when his donkey spoke to him. We will play a game that involves listening to voices that might come from unexpected places.

Take it in turns to blindfold one child, if they wish to do this.

The blindfolded child stands or sits still while the other children walk or run around, depending on how much space is available. The leader shouts "Stop!" and everyone stands where they are. The children take it in turns to say something, such as "Hello!" to see if the blindfolded child can recognise the child speaking.

This works well if the group of children know each other well.

Alternative: one child is blindfolded and the other children move around. One child calls out and the blindfolded person sees if they can point in the direction the sound is coming from.

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### Quieter game - Codebreakers

God tried to tell Balaam that Balaam was doing something that displeased God – but didn't just talk to him. He used the donkey as a code and Balaam had to crack the code.

*You will need:*

- paper with coded phrases on them
- pencils/pens

*What you do:*

Prepare some simple coded phrases (alphanumeric codes, in which 1=A, 2=B, etc., or substitution codes, in which each letter represents the letter before it in the alphabet). Invite your group to work together, or individually, to decode the phrases.

For example:

Alphanumeric code

|        |               |       |
|--------|---------------|-------|
| 7,15,4 | 12,15,22,5,19 | 13, 5 |
| G o d  | L o v e s     | M e   |

Substitution code  
AZKZZL GZC Z CNMLDX  
BALAAM HAD A DONKEY

## Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

For this story we recommend using the Easy-to-read version

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Numbers%2022%3A%2021%20-%2035&version=ERV>

### Where can I find the story online?

Under-fives: Balaam's Donkey, by Little Disciples Adventure Time

<https://youtu.be/yvRs2XD4BP8?si=AQq0kgK-5b0YX5s8>

Five-to-elevens: Balaam, by Crossroads Kids' Club

[https://youtu.be/0PaRIJ\\_hfNo?si=TJxkpU6gVxQqYTVn](https://youtu.be/0PaRIJ_hfNo?si=TJxkpU6gVxQqYTVn)

### Songs to support the story

Under-fives: Balaam Song for Kids, by Little Bible Heroes

<https://youtu.be/ITGKOe35piE?si=0zDr5Az41ivfpoRQ>

Five-to-elevens: God speaks in many different ways, by ReviewandHerald

<https://youtu.be/iYcKQWiqIb4?si=9-v5l6Ee3RnzpkgQ>

## Explore – ways into the theme

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

### A new way to explore the theme

Ask the children if any of them have a pet or have ever been to a zoo or petting farm. Discuss how an animal may show us it's hungry, wants to go out, or wants to play. Maybe have some images of animals and explore what they may be telling us, such as a dog on his tummy, a cat with a toy, a gerbil with a water bottle.

Today we are exploring a story where God speaks to Balaam through a donkey. Let's explore it together.

Re-tell the story using some simple drawings, or fuzzy felts or small world play. We have created an example for you.

### Balaam and His Donkey

One morning, Balaam got ready for a journey. He sat on his donkey and went with some leaders from Moab. Two servants went with him too.

As Balaam travelled along the road, God was not pleased with the direction Balaam was going.

So God sent an angel to stand in the road and stop him.

The donkey could see the angel standing in the road, but Balaam couldn't.

The donkey turned off the road and walked into a field. Balaam felt cross because he did not understand what was happening.

A little later, the angel stood in a narrow place between two walls. The donkey saw the angel again and moved close to the wall. Balaam still couldn't see the angel, and he became frustrated with the donkey.

Then the angel stood in another narrow place where there was no room to go around.

The donkey saw the angel and stopped by lying down.

Balaam was angry because he still did not know the donkey was trying to keep him safe.

Then God did something amazing.

God helped the donkey to speak! The donkey said to Balaam, "Why are you upset with me? I have been trying to help you."

Balaam said, "You made me feel silly."

The donkey replied, "I have carried you for many years. Have I ever acted like this before?"

"No," Balaam said. "You haven't."

Then God opened Balaam's eyes, and Balaam saw the angel standing in the road. Balaam bowed down because he knew this was an important message from God.

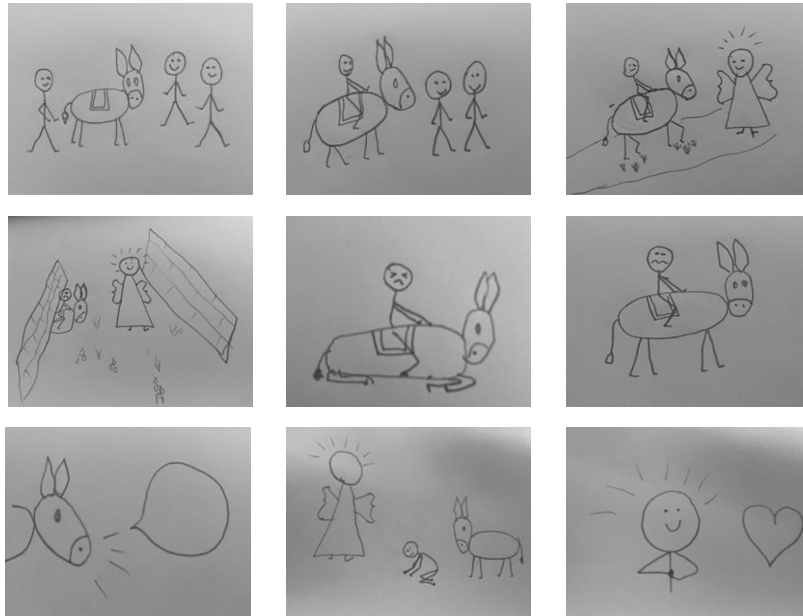
The angel said, "Your donkey saw me and moved away three times. Your donkey was helping to protect you."

Balaam said, "I am sorry. I did not know you were standing in the road. If I am going the wrong way, I will turn back."

The angel said, "You may go, but listen carefully.

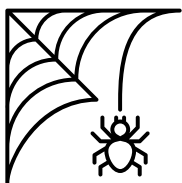
Only say the words God gives you to say."

So Balaam went on his journey, remembering to listen to God.



### Modern parables

Jesus used stories to help people understand the things of God, even though they weren't necessarily overtly Christian stories. Lots of children's books can be used in a similar way as a conversation starter on the week's theme. Examples are shared here but you may think of others too. If you are to use the modern parable, consider buying a copy or borrowing it from the library so children see the actual book and can explore the illustrations more (and support the author).



*Charlotte's Web* – I can talk! by Rotten Tomatoes Family

<https://youtu.be/yMHjk2oo-90?si=FN7DMLrjQgsx2mHS>

*Charlotte's Web* is a story book as well as a film. We have included a film clip here but if you have a simplified storybook version, then do use that.

The book follows Wilbur, a lovable pig saved from slaughter by a young girl named Fern, and his friendship with Charlotte, a clever barn spider.

I wonder if you ever found it difficult to find your voice, to be able to say what you want or to speak out about what you want.

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### Talking together: How might we talk about the Bible story together?

- Why didn't God speak directly to Balaam?
- I wonder how Balaam felt when his donkey spoke to him.
- Have you ever heard an animal speak?
- How else does God speak to us?

### Wondering: Ways to reflect on the theme

- I wonder if God has ever spoken to you.
- Are we listening to God? Are we ready to respond?
- I wonder why we might not do as we are asked.
- Can you think of any other speaking animals in the Bible/ messages?

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### What's in the box? (for under-fives)

Use the special box or bag and sing, "What's in the box/bag? What's in the box/bag? Let's see, let's see, what's in the box/bag?" (to the tune of The Farmer's in the Dell). Pull out the things one by one and then let the children play with them, talking about the theme or the story in simple terms.

This week's box could include:

- A conch shell, or similar – encourage children to place the shell next to their ear and ask them what they can hear. Talk about how we can listen out for the voice of God in lots of places, some of which are unexpected. People often say they feel close to God in nature. Have they ever felt close to God when they are outside, maybe at the park, in the woods or at the seaside? Balaam heard the voice of God when they listened to their donkey. Can they tell what their pet is saying to them, or have they heard another animal "talk" to them in some way?
- A stethoscope, either a medical stethoscope or toy stethoscope – take it in turns to wear the stethoscope and listen to one another's heart. Talk about how God is interested in listening to all of us. This is not only about the words we say but also about how we are feeling; what is in our hearts.
- Cups on a string – see creative response "Telephones on a string" below. Take turns encouraging the children to talk, make noises or sing, and to listen using the cups. Remember that God is there, ready to listen to us, and that we can also be there ready to hear what God has to say to us.
- Using ourselves – encourage the children to notice what they can hear when they listen quietly. Perhaps it is a sound in the room, like the ticking of a clock or their breathing; maybe it is a sound further away like traffic passing on the street or people talking in another room. This will depend on your context.
- *Shrek* characters, such as Shrek and the donkey.
- A tactile cross of wood or fabric (a cross shape reminds us of Jesus. Jesus/God loves us and it's always in the box because Jesus/God always loves us!)
- A set of play people to act out the story or random shapes/bits you can move around to make pictures from the story as you tell it (e.g. stones, felt, twigs etc.)

## Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

### Prayerful activity – Quiet listening

We live in a noisy world. There are noises that we hear just because of where we are, such as a teacher talking, laughter in the playground, the sound of a siren going off. There are noises we might choose to listen to, like music, watching a film, or talking with our friends.

Picture by  
Beatrix M Bell  
2026



Encourage the children to be still. Say that we are going to make time to listen to God's voice.

The thought of being quiet and still can be tricky for children (and adults), so start the time by releasing some energy, perhaps wriggling our bodies, letting out a loud sound. Encourage everyone to sit or lie down, whatever feels most comfortable for them. Having a part of our body, such as our feet or our back, connected to the earth is very grounding.

Then play a piece of music that encourages everyone to be still. Song suggestions: "Be still for the presence of the Lord"; "Breathe" or "Come to the quiet" (Fischy Music). At the end of the song, spend several minutes in silence, slightly longer than what usually feels comfortable. Explain this beforehand and say that being quiet can be a root into rest and to hearing the unexpected, like Balaam heard his donkey speaking.

At the end of the quiet time, have a conversation about what this felt like. Did they like it? What did they notice about their bodies? What thoughts went through their head? What did they hear? Have they ever heard God speaking to them in silence? Might they try listening to God like this at other quiet times? Is it easier to hear God's voice in some places more than others, for example when they are outside rather than in a busy building?

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### Spoken prayer

*The leader says the first line and then everyone repeats, reducing the prayer as you go.*

Be still and know that I am God

**Be still and know that I am God**

Be still and know that I am

**Be still and know that I am**

Be still and know

**Be still and know**

Be still

**Be still**

Be

**Be**

## Responding together

Here are some suggested crafts and activities, and there is a colouring sheet at the end of this resource. You could also use small play toys and/or have a basket of resources available so children can choose their own way to respond.

With an online group, plan whether to deliver any resources in advance or how you will encourage them to use what they've got to hand in their response.

However you do it, it is good for the adults to engage in the response too, and all chat together.

## Telephones on a string

- two yoghurt pots or paper cups
- some permanent markers or paint
- string
- something to make a hole in the bottom of the pots

Decorate your pots. Make a hole in the bottom of each one.

Cut a length of string and tie a knot on one end.

Thread the string down through one of the pots and pull through, making sure the knot holds firm.

Now thread the string up through the hole in the bottom of the other pot and tie a knot in the end of the string.

You have now got a prayer telephone.



Try this out with someone, making sure the string is pulled taut, taking it in turns to talk and listen.

Try using your prayer telephone to listen and talk to God.

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## Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

What could we do this week to carry on what we've learned? Maybe members of the group could come up with a suggestion. If not, get them to choose from these two challenges:

- Talk to someone older or younger than you and ask them to tell you when they last heard God speak to them.
- Each day, sit for just a short time, close your eyes and try to focus on the colour black. I wonder if God says anything to you in this time.

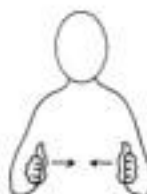
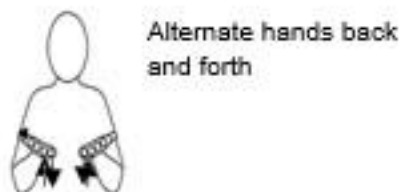
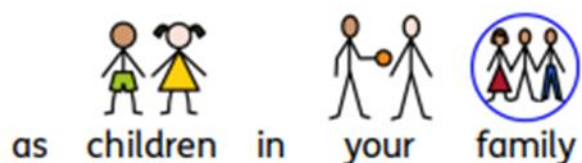
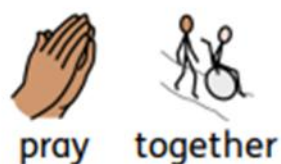
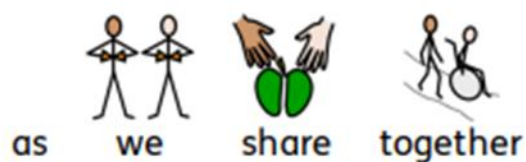
We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of the **Talking donkey** with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing  
**sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk**

Please join the Faith Adventures Facebook Group **bit.ly/FACT\_FB**

Why not have a look at next week's resource on **the wolves in Sheep's clothing**







The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, 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 sins As we forgive those who sin against us

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory

For ever and ever . Amen



