

A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families: For the week of April 15, 2018

Note to Discussion Leaders: Have members read the Bible passage in the group meeting. This is a “worship discussion” guide, and our reflections and applications are grounded in Scripture. Read through this guide before meeting with the group. You do not need to work through the whole guide. Decide which points would be most helpful for the time of meeting together, and use them as a starting point for your time together.

Numbers 22:1-21 “Blessings & Curses

- **We are often clueless about what is happening around us! Can you tell the group about a time it was revealed to you that you had no idea what was going on?**

¹ Then the people of Israel set out and camped in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan at Jericho. ² And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. ³ And Moab was in great dread of the people, because they were many. Moab was overcome with fear of the people of Israel. ⁴ And Moab said to the elders of Midian, “This horde will now lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field.” So Balak the son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, ⁵ sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor, which is near the River in the land of the people of Amaw, to call him, saying, “Behold, a people has come out of Egypt. They cover the face of the earth, and they are dwelling opposite me. ⁶ Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.”

- **What was Moab’s response to Israel camping in their plains? Why? (2-4)**
- **The king of Moab devised a plan to deal with the children of Israel. Describe his strategy. (5-6)**

⁷ So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the fees for divination in their hand. And they came to Balaam and gave him Balak’s message. ⁸ And he said to them, “Lodge here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, as the LORD speaks to me.” So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam. ⁹ And God came to Balaam and said, “Who are these men with you?” ¹⁰ And Balaam said to God, “Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, ¹¹ ‘Behold, a people has come out of Egypt, and it covers the face of the earth. Now come, curse them for me. Perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out.’” ¹² God said to Balaam, “You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed.”

- **Balak commissioned the elders of Moab and Midian to hire Balaam (7-8). The LORD came to Balaam and spoke to him. What did God ask Balaam (9)? What was Balaam’s response to God (10-11)?**

- **What was God’s answer to this response (12)? What was God’s description of the children of Israel? Why did God describe them this way? ([Genesis 12:3](#))**

¹³ So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, “Go to your own land, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you.” ¹⁴ So the princes of Moab rose and went to Balak and said, “Balaam refuses to come with us.”

¹⁵ Once again Balak sent princes, more in number and more honorable than these. ¹⁶ And they came to Balaam and said to him, “Thus says Balak the son of Zippor: ‘Let nothing hinder you from coming to me, ¹⁷ for I will surely do you great honor, and whatever you say to me I will do. Come, curse this people for me.’” ¹⁸ But Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, “Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the command of the LORD my God to do less or more. ¹⁹ So you, too, please stay here tonight, that I may know what more the LORD will say to me.” ²⁰ And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, “If the men have come to call you, rise, go with them; but only do what I tell you.” ²¹ So Balaam rose in the morning and saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab.

- **What was Balaam’s response to the princes of Moab (13)? What did the princes of Moab do with Balaam’s response (14)?**
- **What did Balak attempt to do when Balaam refused to come and curse the children of Israel (15-17)?**
- **What was Balaam’s response to this second attempt to hire him (18-19)?**
- **The LORD gave Balaam further instructions (20). Did Balaam obey (21)?**
- **God is at work on our behalf in ways we cannot see-- His faithfulness must be revealed to us. This past Sunday, the congregation sang Charles Wesley’s great hymn, “[Arise, My Soul Arise](#)”. [Read](#), [listen](#), or [sing](#) that hymn together. What facet of the eternal and heavenly ministry of Jesus on our behalf most encourages you? Why?**
- **Each week in worship, we pair a New Testament reading with the Numbers Sermon text. This week, we read [Ephesians 1:3-6](#). Read that passage now as a guide to prayer, thanking God for every spiritual blessing in Christ and asking God for eyes to see our faithful, Triune God.**

Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on [Numbers 22:1-21](#).

- Where are the people of God?
 - On the plains of Moab
 - Within sight of the promised Land
 - They will be here awhile (the whole book of Deuteronomy)
 - They are camping
- There is an unseen battle raging in the hills above them and they are blissfully unaware. The Israelites could probably see the smoke from the offerings in the hills ([Numbers 22:41](#))
- Balak, the King of Moab is afraid. Beware fearful kings (see Pharaoh and Herod). He seeks a weapon of mass destruction.
- Balaam, we know from archaeological evidence was quite a powerful figure.
- Unlike with Pharaoh and Herod, what is happening here is far more significant. It involves destruction in a manner we could never recover from. Balak wants to use Balaam to take away the people of God's only real and true treasure. He wants to remove the only thing that makes them distinctive.
- From the very beginning, Israel has existed for one reason:

"The Lord had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you'." ([Genesis 12:1-3](#))

- This is why they exist.
- A word about the direction of the narrative: There is a lot of humor in this story. It is comedic. Even in the middle of tragedy.
 - This story is a parable on our lives and the whole movement of history.
 - A comedy in the classical sense of the word is not just about laughs but that pain and suffering do not win in the end.

Questions about this week's study guide? Contact Kevin Greene, kevin@wepc.org
To hear sermons and access past study guides visit www.wepc.org/archivedsermons