

Balaam's Donkey and Shrek

Do you believe that animals can speak? I think animals can speak in their own languages whether it is meow or woof, woof. But wouldn't it be great if animals could speak just like us?

Well in some ways the congregation here are blessed to have many animals among us who can speak just like us. But you guys aren't animals, you may behave like animals sometimes but your not animals your human beings, made in God's image. But wouldn't it be great if animals could speak just like us?

Genesis 2:18-20 "The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found."

So God called all the animals to Adam and Adam gave them names, that's why elephants are called elephants and badgers are called badgers. But it doesn't say anything about animals talking does it?

Genesis 3:1-5 "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Wow we have a snake who talks, isn't that amazing? This snake was a bad snake though because he spoke lies to Eve and she believed him and that caused all sorts of trouble for everyone who has ever lived on the earth since.

Now I want to talk to you today about another animal who can speak.

In a faraway land called Duloc, a very small heartless ruler named Lord Farquaad lived. And one day he threw out all the fairy tale beings from the land so it can be as boring as he is. But there are two characters that are going to stand in his way. The first is a big green, smelly ogre with a heart of gold named Shrek, who lives alone in the woods, and he is feared by all the people in the land of Duloc.

When Lord Farquaad, the ruler of Duloc, tells all the fairy-tale beings to go to the woods, Shrek loses his peaceful life and his home becomes a refugee camp. And so Shrek sets out to find Lord Farquaad to convince him to take the fairy-tale beings back where they belong, and leave him alone.

Lord Farquaad accepts under one condition. Shrek must first go and find the beautiful young princess Fiona, who will become Farquaad's bride. But Shrek is not alone on this adventure, he has his faithful steed, Donkey, who will do anything but shut up. Now Donkey means well, he's always trying to help and protect Shrek in his quest, he helps fight the big dragon while Shrek rescues Princess Fiona. And so Shrek and Donkey become very close friends but Donkey just cannot shut up, he just talks and talks and talks and talks.

And when some of you boys get older and get married you will understand just exactly what that means, only joking.

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But it gets to the point where **Shrek** will not listen to **Donkey** because he speaks so much and so **Shrek** doesn't treat him very nice.

Now let me share with you a true story which we find in the Bible about a donkey who really can also speak. The story of **Balaam** and his talking donkey on their journey to a place called Moab is found in **Numbers 22: 21-35**.

A long time ago, even before baby Jesus came to live with us on earth, there was a man named **Balaam**. Balaam once was a good prophet of God, but now he was not following God's Will. Instead, he did whatever he wanted, even when God said "**NO Balaam!**"

The king of Moab wanted Balaam to come and send a curse on their enemies. But the enemies of Moab happened to be God's chosen people, the Israelites. So of course God said "**NO Balaam, don't go!**" But Balaam didn't listen. Eventually, he decided to go to Moab and do what the king wanted.

Numbers 22: 23-35 (Paraphrased) Balaam got up from bed very early in the morning for his long journey. He would be travelling with the prince from Moab. "**Wow what an honour!**" he thought to himself, not even thinking that God may be very angry because of his disobedience.

Balaam leaped up on his trusted donkey, and along with his two servants followed right behind the prince. Everything was great. Balaam had a big smile on his face. Then suddenly, the donkey saw an angel of the Lord with a sharp sword right there in the middle of the path, blocking the way. So instead of going straight ahead, she ran into a nearby field to avoid being hurt by the sword. But Balaam didn't see anything.

He was very upset that his donkey would do such a thing. "**How embarrassing!**" he thought. "**You bad donkey,**" Balaam yelled as he beat her with a stick. Finally, he was able to get the sore donkey back on to the path.

After going a little further, they came to a narrow passage with steep walls of rock on both sides. The donkey once again saw the angel of the Lord blocking the way. So she moved as close to the wall as possible to avoid being hurt by the sword.

But as she did, Balaam's foot was crushed against the rocks, and he became very angry again. "**You dumb donkey!**" Balaam yelled, as he beat her several more times with a stick.

A little further, along the way, the angel of the Lord appeared again. Balaam still couldn't see the angel, but the donkey could. There was no way to turn this time. The donkey thought to herself, "**What can I do now? I can't go left, I can't go right, and I can't even back up.**" She did the only thing possible, and sat down right there on the path. "**What a stupid donkey!**" Balaam cried out as he beat her even harder than before.

Suddenly, the donkey turned to Balaam, and opened her mouth and said, "**Hey! What did I do to you that you should beat me three times with a stick?**" For some reason, Balaam wasn't impressed to hear a donkey talk.

He only answered, "**You made me look like a fool, not following the path, and crushing me against the wall, then sitting down like a stubborn old mule. If I only had a sword, I'd stick it in you right now.**"

"**Why are you saying this?**" the donkey replied. "**Haven't I been faithful to you all these years, have I ever tried to harm you or make you look foolish?**" Just then, Balaam saw the angel of the

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Lord standing there in the road. He fell to his knees and put his face very low to the ground to show his respect.

Then the angel of the Lord spoke to Balaam, "Why are you beating your donkey? She saw me in the path, and didn't come near because she knew I would strike you with my sword. You asked me before if you could go to Moab, and I said, NO Balaam! But you went anyway. You asked for my guidance, and I tried to guide you to do the right thing, but you did not listen."

Then Balaam realized he had sinned against the Lord. He would continue on his journey with the prince after all, but God would not let him curse His people. The Word of the Lord was final, **NO Balaam!**

Now did God want Balaam to go to Moab? No He didn't. But Balaam disobeyed God and just went right on ahead and done what he wanted to do. And so angel of the Lord with a sword in his hand showed up on the road but only the donkey could see the angel. But it wasn't until after the donkey spoke to him, did he realise the angel was there.

Now I don't know about you but if were taking our pet dog Oscar for a walk and he said 'hi Mike can we play in the woods today?' I think I would be in shock and book an appointment with a specialised doctor. Or if Roxanne was out horse ridding and the horse turned around and said, 'Hey Roxanne I have lots of energy today can we do some jumping' I'm sure Roxanne would be in shock and probably fall off her horse.

But Balaam didn't do any of those things; he started to speak to the donkey as if it were the most normal thing for a person to do. Now Shrek may have treated Donkey badly in the film but not as bad a Balaam treated his donkey. He was really bad towards his donkey in fact the Bible says that he beat his donkey three times with a stick.

But why wasn't Balaam able to see the angel of the Lord at first like the donkey could? Well in many ways God tried to guide Balaam to do the right thing, but Balaam did not listen, instead he chose to disobey God. And so God had to make use of a humble donkey to get Balaam's attention.

In the animal world there are lots of animals with big ears. Rabbits, Elephants, deer, goats. You see one of the reasons God blesses us with two ears and one mouth is so that we will listen more then we will talk.

If you're at school and the teachers talking all the children are expected to listen. When I'm speaking to you all this morning everyone is expected to listen. When Hosea or Funmi are teaching you all at KBC you're expected to listen at times.

After Cain murdered his brother Abel, God said to Cain in Genesis 4:10 "What have you done? Listen!" Proverbs 1:5 "Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance." When Jesus was being transfigured, God spoke from heaven and said to Peter, James, and John, in Luke 9:35, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."

Now if God says listen, He means listen because He has something important for you to hear. And do you know what God wants to tell you today? John 13:34+35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

God says I want you to love one another. You see although you guys are young, everyone here including you guys are all on a journey together. And we need to make sure that we treat each other right along that journey.

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You can't just talk and talk and talk and talk all the time like **Donkey** did with **Shrek** because when you're talking, you can't listen to each other and especially to can't hear what God is trying to say. And you can't treat each other nastily like **Balaam** did with his donkey because when that happens your doing what you want to do and not what God wants you to do.

And that's why none of us can just do what we want to do, because that will just break God's heart. Yes **Donkey** really annoyed **Shrek**, but they went on an adventure and eventually rescued Princess Fiona together. Yes **Balaam's donkey** annoyed him when he wouldn't go in the direction he wanted him to go, but at least now he realised that he should have always been listening to God.

So let me challenge you this week, to listen to each other and read the Bible and listen very carefully to what God has to say to you.