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considering the request of the king of Moab in the first place (a nation who was an enemy to God's people)?

- Why, when God already answered his first request, did he go back and try to speak with him again (cp. 22:12, 19)? Wasn't God clear the first time? Why did he keep looking for a second opinion from God on the matter?
- Why, would he flirt with danger and disaster and get so cozy and comfortable with known enemies of God and truth? What kind of impression was this giving to the people he was leading by constant interactions with Moabites and Midianites?
- Why wouldn't Balaam tell Israel they should move out of the area and away from this enemy to avoid their influence (25:1)? Why stay nearby? Why not separate and flee?

Of course, all along, the New Testament gives us the answer as to why Balaam does what he does: *"for profit"* (Jude 11), *"the wages of unrighteousness"* (2nd Peter 2:15). Just follow the money.

The Old Testament tells us Balaam saw that *"diviner's fee"* in the *"hand"* of the *"elders of Midian"* (22:7) and the *"honorable princes"* of this powerful nation consulting him (22:15) and he suddenly delays, dodges, and doubtfully gives answers when God was clear about His will all along. He may have said the right things about money, but clearly money was a major influence in why he would not take a hard stand and put an end to flirting with the enemy. He should have cut things off quickly but kept stalling, waffling, wavering, and keeping a dead-end relationship alive. He was a prophet-for-profit.

Then, I think about how God wanted us to be able to learn from Balaam. He wanted preachers like me and preachers like many of my friends to realize false teachers today get swayed by the same things. We are susceptible to the temptations of money and pride. We see *"the diviner's fee"* and a chance to increase our bottom line and we can start to get shifty and shady like Balaam.

So, for example, because some guys want to get *"monetized"* on social media, they share the platform on their broadcasts and podcasts with false teachers to open up their viewership to a broader audience. Broader audience = more viewers = more \$ on social media platforms. Sometimes they say highly controversial clickbait things to generate a larger audience. Truth gets boring. A narrow view of truth leads to a narrow audience and that doesn't pay as good for the aspiring

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content creators.

Here's another example: some guys may be in the book or publishing business so they get cozy with people, institutions, and businesses at various lectureships and venues that open the door to a broader network of business while seemingly turning a blind eye to the false teachings and doctrines that need to be boldly addressed, not ignored and dismissed. We avoid the "issues" because it may just be what's better for business.

Consider another example: some colleges survive off of their donors and must try to keep the door as broad as possible in who they bring in as speakers and lecturers so as to not alienate their alumni and potential donors and future students. Year after year, the net gets cast wider and wider until they become unrecognizable as God's people due to consistent compromise. (Where have we seen this recently?) As broader and broader views are tolerated truth is whittled down and diminished in its wake.

Let's not just think it is business-owners who are susceptible to this temptation. Some Christians want to stay on "the good side" of their popular friends from colleges, camps, and childhood friendships. They would not dare disagree with a popular professor, board member, or preacher. So, they are very careful not to take hard stands that could cause their popularity within the "camp" to be at risk. Rather than stand we quietly compromise, like peer pressured children insecure and afraid of what others may think if we speak out.

Likewise, some preachers may want to preach out of both sides of their mouth. The problem is "truth" doesn't have two equal sides. This type of two-facedness is unbecoming of truth-proclaimers following in the heritage of men and women who died for the sake of truth and the proclamation of the unadulterated gospel. Yet, some say enough to appease the "conservatives" among them, but equivocate enough to please the "progressives" filling the pews. They avoid hard subjects or just making apparent applications (like this post) because they fear it may not be received well if they get too pointed (Jesus didn't seem to mind—Matthew 21:45). Some are preaching to keep a job rather than call people to repentance.

From a business standpoint, I get it. I understand the temptation to compromise, to avoid hard stands, to ride the fence so we can keep a foot in both sides of the camp. I'd be lying to you if I told you I had never stood at the intersection of this temptation. But, Balaam was

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called to be a prophet, not a businessman. Preachers are called to preach the Word, not just be concerned with filling pews by any means. We are simply servants of the Lord's church, not our own church. So, when tempted to pull a Balaam, it is vital we remember who we are, Whom we serve, and what it is we are called to proclaim.

I also understand it can be very hard to detect. We want to give people the benefit of the doubt. But, at some point, we have to admit when Balaam's just hanging out with both camps because of the money, and the prestige. Some can't see or stand for truth clearly because it's being blurred by dollar signs and a desire for popularity. There comes a time we need to heed the warnings about Balaams in the New Testament church—and avoid being one and avoid coddling them. The apostles of Jesus would not have warned us three times if God didn't want us to see it.

I don't want to be a Balaam. I don't want to preach just for the money. There is a vast difference between a preacher who gets paid to preach and one who preaches to get paid. I don't want to preach sermons that sound more like a life-coach just to be liked and invited back. I don't want to curse the very people I'm called to protect by my compromised convictions and connections just because it might be good for nickels and numbers. Balaam got blinded by these things and lost his way. We are warned not to follow his path and to speak truth in love clearly, unequivocally, and unashamedly regardless of the earthly outcomes.

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WHAT WAS BAD ABOUT BALAAM?

Joshua Welch

I have been thinking a lot about Balaam lately. The New Testament warns about him three times (2nd Peter 2:15-16; Jude 11; Revelation 2:14). Yet, when I read Numbers 22-24, in the Old Testament account, he's just a real conundrum to me.

He doesn't seem all that bad on the surface. Actually, he seems like a real friendly guy who just wants to get along with everybody. I'm really tempted to like the guy. Several details stand out to give me that impression:

- He prays and pleads with God multiple times (22:8, 19; 23:3).
- The things he says, on the surface, sound good: *"Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more"* (22:18; cp. 24:13). Sounds like a solid guy right there.
- He even offers generous, extravagant sacrifices in worship to God and prophesies (23:1, 4).

So, what's so bad about him? Why does God warn us about him?

Then, I read the text a couple more times and questions begin to pop into my mind as we dig a bit deeper.

- Why was Balaam, a prophet of Israel, even negotiating or
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RIO GRANDE VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

505-864-0282

rgvcoc@gmail.com

Box 989, Belén, NM 87002

www.RGVChurchOfChrist.org

75 Sherrod Boulevard

Facebook.com/RGVChurchOfChrist