

A MISSIONARY? ME?

EIGHT REFLECTIONS WRITTEN BY
WOMEN SERVING IN THE MISSION FIELD

BIBLE STUDY

BY KAROL SELLE



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SESSION 1

Joanna and Balaam

My name is Joanna Johnson and I am a missionary in Taiwan. I have been called to teach English and Bible classes to middle and high school students. I have not been placed as the result of some great skill or qualification on my part. I am inexperienced, insecure, and inadequate. But God has called me anyway, because it's not about me or what I can do. It's about God and what He can do.

I teach in a Christian school that has a good academic reputation. Because of this, the great majority of students are not Christians. Every day I talk to people who are not Christians about Jesus and His love. These are 300 people who I am seeing weekly and with whom I am building relationships. These are people I love and with whom I am honored to interact.

The fact that I am a teacher in Taiwan is clear proof to me that God has called me here. On my own, I had no natural inclination toward Taiwan and I had an inclination specifically against being a teacher. There is nothing that anyone could have ever said that would have convinced me that I wanted to go and teach in Taiwan. Yet, here I am. The fact that God called me shows His power. He's the only one who could make that happen.

My experience as a missionary so far has made it so that the biblical missionary that I relate to most is Balaam's donkey. Donkeys cannot talk. They don't even have a good reputation amongst animals. Balaam's donkey was not used to deliver God's message because he would be able to most clearly articulate God's will or because he was the most respected. His inadequacy was his strength. He was God's missionary because his weakness could show God's power.

Thus far I have made it through one school year. I have learned, grown, and loved those students so much, but I am still not an excellent teacher. I didn't discover that I am actually a teaching prodigy or that everyone is just intrinsically inclined to listen to me. It was a year filled with hard work, struggles, and conflicts. There were days of laughter and days of tears. There were many, many days of my questioning why God called me and not someone else.

JOANNA AND BALAAM'S DONKEY

Teaching nearly 300 students a week, I struggle with classroom management and remembering names. We were understaffed this year and I was frequently exhausted and occasionally grouchy. I'm generally selfish, scared, and prideful. Yet God called me. He called me to a place of my weaknesses. He called me to a place of struggle. He called me to a place of humility. It is in this weakness that His strength can be seen so clearly in spite of me. He has been using me to show and tell students of His love and to show them the joy and peace that comes from knowing Jesus.

Balaam's donkey tried to warn Balaam away from destruction. He did the best that he could, and when that failed God used Him in a way that was impossible. Balaam's donkey was a missionary used by God to share God's word. So am I.

We cannot discern God's will in our lives based on our success. God works through our successes and our failures. He works through our comfort and discomfort. God gives us gifts and talents to use for His glory, and He also uses our weaknesses and inadequacies for the same purpose. God called men to walk on water, dead girls to come back to life, and donkeys to talk. He also calls each of us to our own impossible tasks for the sake of the Gospel. *For, with God, all things are possible* (Matthew 19:26b).



JOANNA'S BIO

Joanna Johnson serves the Lord through The Lutheran Church —Missouri Synod (LCMS) as a GEO (globally engaged in outreach) missionary in Taiwan. In this role, she teaches both English and Bible classes to middle and high school students. She's been serving in this role since 2017. Joanna grew up in Newton, NC, and she calls St. John's Luther-

an Church in Conover, NC, her home congregation. She received a bachelor's degree and her Director of Parish Music certification from Concordia University St. Paul in 2015. Before serving as a GEO missionary in Taiwan, Joanna served on several short-term mission trips, including Vyborg, Russia, Southeast Asia, and Alaska. In her free time, Joanna enjoys knitting, swimming,



and playing the guitar, trombone, ukulele, and other musical instruments.

Discussion and Study

After reading Joanna's story, why do you think she would go to Taiwan with this appointment? Adventure or Escape???

What do you think the Lord is trying to teach her and you from the account?

Do you agree or disagree with this statement: "God gives us gifts and talents to use for His glory and He also uses our weaknesses and inadequacies for the same purpose?" Give an example from your personal life.

To find out more about Balaam and the donkey, read Numbers 22 to 24. What was happening with the Israelites?

Who was Balak and what did he want from Balaam?

If you have a footnote about Balaam, share it. God talks to Balaam. What does He say and what happened when Balaam finally went to Balak?

The donkey speaks. What is this all about? Did he have a message?

How did the story end?

This is such an interesting encounter recorded in the Bible. What meaning might it have for your life?

Joanna thought the donkey was a missionary used by the Lord. What do you think?

+ *Close with a prayer asking the Lord to provide moments of amazement to encourage you to be His witness.*



