#TargetPractice: How can we decide who/what needs to influence us?

In the message today, we learned about Balaam and his influence over the nation of Israel. If you just read the account in the Bible, you see that Balaam was used by God to voice blessings over Israel instead of the curses that Moabite King Balak wanted him to do. That gives the impression that Balaam was a good guy, listening to God, and wanting the best for Israel.

But if you read further and in other places in the Bible, the opposite is found to be true. He was a sorcerer. A sorcerer is a person who claims or is believed to have magic powers and uses them to harm other people. Another word would be a wizard. These people are being used by evil to harm or deceive others.

That is why Balak asked Balaam to curse Israel. He wanted Israel to be harmed so they wouldn't be so powerful and possibly cause harm to his nation. But God is more powerful than evil. He used Balaam to instead proclaim blessings on Israel and ultimately proclaim destruction to Balak's nation.

Balak was unhappy (as you can imagine) and would not pay Balaam what was promised. Now Balaam obviously spoke God's words and recognized God's power. In fact, he had a donkey start talking to him to help prove God's power!!! However, he didn't turn and put his trust in God. Instead, he allowed greed for things to cause him to give Balak advice in order to harm Israel.

Balaam knew Israel was blessed by God and that God would protect them. But he also knew that if the people of Israel made the choice to turn away from God, that they would face consequences for not being faithful to God.

So he instructed Balak how to lead the Israelites to sin against God and start worshiping false gods. As a result, Israel was punished. But that didn't help out Balak. Eventually, his nation went to war with Israel and Balaam was killed in battle.

Who Are You Listening To? | Guard Your Heart! | Proverbs 4:23 Bible Lesson for Kids

We have to be careful what and who we allow to influence us. Just like we learned from Balaam. Even though he said some good things, he was more interested in money and things than he was in doing the right thing. He had the wrong motives for doing the right thing and then just completely turned to do the wrong thing.

NOT EVERY VOICE DESERVES TO DIRECT YOUR LIFE

Remember to ask yourself: Is this helping me do something that God says is right or is it pulling me away from Him? This applies to people you are with but also with the things you read, watch, and listen to.

- If you are still unsure, pray. Ask God for guidance.
- Read the Bible. Study how others handled problems.

- Talk to someone who you trust to be a good influence and who will lead you in the ways of God.