

Message Discussion Guide

DOES GOD CHANGE HIS MIND?

The Church at Brook Hills . Dr. David Platt . March 2, 2008 . Exodus 32:7-14

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God’s Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Open your Small Group time discussing the nature of change. Some people resist change so strongly that it paralyzes them, while others become their best and thrive through the change process. Briefly discover how those in your group respond to change by using the following questions or some that you create.

- On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being extremely low and 10 being extremely high), how would you describe your comfort level with change?
- Would you rather work for an employer who hardly ever changes his/her mind or for an employer who was open to a lot of changes and made changes often?
- Would you rather have a government that constantly changed the laws and rules or a government that didn’t make many changes? Why or why not?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you found out the rules had been changed and you didn’t know it? How did that make you feel?
- Some people believe the god(s) they serve are constantly changing or are changing the rules as to what it takes to please them. What would it be like to serve a god like that?

In our study today, we will see that our God does not change in His Perfections (attributes), Purposes, and Promises, but He does change in His relationship with us.

Option 2

Whether you grew up in a small town or a big city, as you’ve grown up, you’ve likely had the opportunity to see your childhood home (or homes) radically change. Former soccer fields have been transformed to strip mall parking lots, rough two-lane roads have been smoothed and widened, and it’s most likely the people that lived on your street no longer live there. Big changes are obvious, little changes are more subtle but change is part of being human. From entire towns to daily individual plans we cannot get away from change. Use one or both of the following topics to begin discussing the phenomenon of change with your Small Group.

- Discuss the major changes to your group members’ hometowns or the places they consider “home”.
- Discuss how many changes you’ve all experienced today (this could be anything from changing clothes, changing lunch plans, or a change in attitude).

In our study today, as hard as it is from our human perspective, we will see that our God does not change in His Perfections (attributes), Purposes, and Promises, but He does change in His relationship with us.

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Review the Message . . .

Review the context: Moses has led the people of God out of slavery in Egypt. The people have seen God's Power and Faithfulness as He delivered them and then provided for them on their journey to the Promised Land. They have stopped at Mt. Sinai and Moses has gone up on the mountain to hear from God. The people have seen the manifestation of God's Glory on the mountain. They have literally seen the mountain shake beneath the power of God's presence! However, Moses has been gone for over a month and their unbelief begins to take over. Thinking that he is probably dead, they ask Aaron to create a golden calf which they begin to worship just as the people of Egypt had done. God is very displeased and angry. He tells Moses what is happening and what He is about to do because of the people's sin.

Read Exodus 32: 7-14. Point out in verse 10 that God says, "*Leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them.*" The word used here for destruction is absolute. This was the ultimate ruling – God ending this people once and for all and establishing a new people through Moses. But in verse 11, Moses begins to pray. His prayer finishes in verse 13, and in verse 14 we read these words, "*The Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.*"

Verse 14 causes us to question if Moses' prayer caused God to relent, repent, or change His Mind?

Four Truths...

1. God's **perfections** **are unchanging.**

- Have different group members read these scriptures: Hebrews 1:10-12, 13:8, James 1:17, and Malachi 3:6 and answer these questions:
 - What do we know about God from these verses?
 - Are these verses referring to God's *Perfections* (Attributes) or His *Actions*?
 - What are other *Perfections* (Attributes) that we know about God from the Scriptures?
 - Is it good news or bad news for humanity that God's *Perfections* (Attributes) do not change? For Christ-followers? Why or why not?

2. God's **purposes** **are unchanging.**

- Have different group members read these scriptures: Psalms 33: 10-11 and Isaiah 46:9-11 and answer these questions:
 - What do these verses tell us about God's *Plans* and *Purposes*?
 - Do these verses indicate that God might be convinced in the future to change His mind about His *Purposes* or *Plans*? Why or why not? (Remember that He has already decided and revealed what He is going to do.)

3. God's **promises** **are unchanging.**

- Have someone read Numbers 23:19 and Psalms 89:34-37 and answer these questions:
 - Do these verses indicate in any way that God might not deliver on His promises?
 - Has God ever promised anything that He has not delivered on, other than future promises?
- As Moses prayed to God for mercy on the people, He appealed to these three truths as he prayed:
 1. He called Him LORD, appealing to His covenant name revealed in Exodus 3, Yahweh, the I AM, who is self-existent, eternal, self-sufficient, and unchanging.

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2. He appealed to His Purposes and Plans to bring the people out of Egypt into the Promised Land.
 3. He appealed to His Promises that He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- Did God need Moses to remind Him of these three truths?
 - Who did need reminding of these truths?
 - Who is being exalted through Moses' prayer, Moses or God?

Pastor David pointed out that in Exodus 32, the plan of God for mankind is being revealed to the people of God.

4. God's plan is unfolding .

- **God judges men .**
 - How do we see this truth in these scriptures?
 - What does that tell us about God's character?
 - What does that mean for us over three thousand years later? Does God still judge sin?
 - Are all sinners still under God's wrath and judgment?
- **God provides a mediator .**
 - Did God choose Moses for this moment, or was God surprised by Moses' response?
 - Did Moses convince God that he needed to do something that He didn't want to do, or was Moses fulfilling the role God had for him by standing in the gap as a mediator for His People?
 - What does the fact that God provided a mediator for His people tell us about God's character?
 - How does this scripture help us to understand what God was going to do for all mankind in Christ Jesus hundreds of years later?
- **God displays His mercy .**
 - Did Moses convince God to display mercy or did Moses prayer put on display God's Mercy to Moses and the people?
 - Did God need Moses to pray in order to display His Mercy? Why then do you think He had Moses pray?
 - Was God or Moses ultimately changed by Moses prayer? In what ways?
 - What does this revelation about God's unfolding plan tell us about the character of God?

Three Applications...

1. Praise God! Because...

- **He does not change in His reign over us.**
 - Why is this good news for each of us?
- **He does change in His relationship to us.**
 - What does this mean? How is this truth seen in this scripture?

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- How has God changed in relationship to each of us who are Christ-followers? (*We were once under His wrath and because we have received His forgiveness and grace in Christ Jesus we are now under His mercy.*)
- How should this truth change the way we relate to Him?

2. Pray to God! Why

- He involves us in His plan.
 - Did God have to involve Moses in His plan?
 - Who benefited because God invited Him into His Plan?
 - How was Moses changed because he joined God in His Plan by praying for the people?
 - Why should we likewise join God in His Plan by praying faithfully for those under His wrath?
- He uses us to accomplish His purposes.
 - As Moses felt the judgment of God on the sins of the people and then saw the mercy of God exhibited to the people, do you think he prayed more or less for the people in the future? Why?
 - How do you think his character was shaped as a result of his praying?
 - How do you think he was impacted by these events to join God in fulfilling His purposes in the future?
 - What does this tell us about our own need to be faithfully praying for others? What are the benefits to us as we pray?

3. Proclaim God!

- The unsaved have a mediator in heaven.
 - Who is the mediator of the new covenant? (Jesus, God Himself)
 - How should the truth that God has provided a mediator who is greater than Moses impact the way we spend our lives?
- The saved have a mission on earth.
 - Consider the choice Moses had according to Exodus 32:10 – to soak up the blessing of having an entire nation created from his lineage or to boldly and sacrificially intercede on behalf of a sinful people. What lesson(s) can we learn from Moses' character about the mission we have been given as Christ-followers?
 - Is there any mission for our lives that is more important or that will be more meaningful than proclaiming the truth of the gospel and making disciples of all nations?
 - What one or two truths will you take away from this study that will change you, your values, or the way you will live life this week?