

## Can We Change God's Mind? (Genesis 18:16-33)

Seasons of Change sermon series

By Pastor David Hillis, 09.24.17

### **BIG IDEA:** God chooses to use His people as mediators in the world's unfolding plans to help accomplish His purposes.

Does God Really Change His Mind? (Exodus 32; Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Malachi 3:6; Matthew 15:21-28; James 1:17)

What We Know About God:

1. God's character and essence do not change. (Hebrews 1:10-12, 13:8; James 1:17; 1 John 1:5)
2. God's promises do not change. (Numbers 23:19; Psalms 89:34-37; Isaiah 40:6-8; Matthew 24:35-36; Hebrews 6:16-19)
3. God's plans do not change. (Psalm 33:10-11; Isaiah 46:10; Jeremiah 18:1-17; Ephesians 1:3-14)
4. For those bound by time, God's plans are unfolding. (Genesis 3:8-13, 18:20-21; Isaiah 55:8-9; 1 Timothy 2:1-7; 2 Peter 3:8)

God has a view of sin that cannot and will not change. Because He is fully just, He cannot turn a blind eye to sin. Yet, God loves His creation, and His creation has so often lived completely rebellious to God.

God sends mediators, intercessors, to speak and appeal to Him and to the world. Ultimately, God sent Himself, Jesus, as a mediator, so that the judgment required for sin would never have to come upon any of those who chose to be His children. God uses His children, in a way, as mediators. He uses us to speak to those who aren't following God, to appeal to them about the love of God. He uses us to pray for His will, His plans to be accomplished on this earth, because He wants to build relationship with us and partner with us to accomplish His purposes.

We may think we are pestering God, but what is happening is that He (in a way) is pestering us! He is pricking our hearts, to get us to pray; softening our hearts, to get us to love others as much as we love ourselves; opening doors of communication so that we are talking to Him, learning more about who He is and His unchanging character so that we are equipped and emboldened to show the love of God and speak the truth from God to those who need to hear it.

**MY NEXT STEP:** *Do I want to partner with God to help bring about His plans in this world, and in my life? Rather than trying to change God's mind, can I get excited about discovering what is on His mind already?*

## QUESTIONS FOR MY TIME WITH GOD:

1. Reread Genesis 18, asking God to help you fully consider what it says and how it might relate in some way to your life. Consider a word, phrase or sentence that is especially meaningful to you or that God is calling you to pay attention to, and how God would have you apply that idea or concept to your life today.
2. Review Genesis 18:20. God speaks of how "the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah" had reached him. How does it make you feel knowing that God sees everything that goes on? What are the things it seems like God turns a blind eye to?
3. Re-read 1 Timothy 2:1-6 about the importance of partnering with God through prayer to help serve as a mediator, and how Jesus was the ultimate mediator. Read these additional verses on prayer, to see how they give further insight: Galatians 4:4-6; Hebrews 11:6; James 5:13-18; 1 John 5:14-15. How are our roles different from Jesus's as mediators? Why do you think God is so interested in us still playing the role of mediator?
4. Read the story of the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8. In light of what you have learned about the unchangeability (or immutability) of God, what does this teach you about our perspective and our approach to God in prayer?
5. Read the story of Hannah's prayers for a son in 1 Samuel 1. If God indeed doesn't change, then what in hindsight can you see God was doing in the story of her life? How might you appreciate her follow-up prayer of praise in 1 Samuel 2:1-10?
6. Review all the Scriptures listed next to the main points in the sermon notes, to seek to have a better understanding of how God's character, promises and plans never change.
7. Next week we start a brand-new series on how to have a relationship with the Holy Spirit. We will start the series by seeking to understand more clearly who the Holy Spirit is, with a look at Acts 19:1-7. How would you describe the Holy Spirit, and His role in your life? Share your thoughts with Pastor Dave in the comments of the "Hello" card at [www.myGrace.church](http://www.myGrace.church)!

## PRAYERS FOR MY TIME WITH GOD: Victims of Natural Disasters

*Pray for those who have been devastated by recent natural disasters and those who have lost their lives so suddenly. May God bless those who have survived, heal their memories of trauma and devastation, and give them the courage to face the long road of rebuilding ahead. May the work of the relief agencies be guided by the grace and strength that comes from God alone. Pray that we will respond with generosity in prayer, in assistance, in aid to the best of our abilities, and that our hearts will remain focused on the needs of those affected, even after the crisis is over. Amen.*