

## **Theme: Who's ALMIGHTY?**

### **Topic: God's Immutability - He Won't Change**

#### **Date:**

**Opening:** Start by showing the clip in the resources folder, "Time Lapse Video". It's a short collection of time lapse videos you can get off youtube which show food decomposing over a long period of time. The point here is that OVER TIME...EVERYTHING CHANGES.

Today we'll tackle this fifth attribute of God's character – His immutability (which means He doesn't change). Even though everything else changes...God remains the same.

**Small Groups:** Split up into small groups and answer these questions:

1. Share your name and answer this question: If you were the principal of your school for a week, what is one REALISTIC thing you would change?
2. What is one thing about you right now that you wish would never change as you grow older?
3. As we talk about God never changing, what is a trait about God that is hard for you to imagine NEVER changing?
4. What is the trait about God you are very grateful doesn't change?

Get some feedback on these questions.

Our focus today will be on how God never changes. Much of what we discuss today is found in a chapter on God's "immutability" in J.I. Packer's book, *Knowing God*, (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973). This chapter is a great read on the topic we cover today.

Packer starts his chapter with a great point. We often feel very disconnected from the Bible as we read it, largely because it was written IN a time ABOUT a time and culture very different from ours. Bible times were primitive, barbaric, agricultural, and absent of most of the inventions we are familiar with today. So how can we relate? His point is that what connects us to the stories of the Bible is that THE GOD WE READ ABOUT HAS NOT CHANGED...CAN NOT CHANGE. This trait of never changing makes the material we read in the Bible very relevant, for the God revealed in the Bible is the same God we deal with today.

It's like C.S. Lewis' books *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, AND *Prince Caspian*. The characters of Lucy, Susan, Edmund and Peter go back to Narnia in *Prince Caspian*, yet the land of Narnia has undergone much change over countless years. In fact, over the series of books, the land changes quite a lot. What keeps the story compelling is that ASLAN NEVER CHANGES. Each time we see Him He is constant, never changing.

It's hard to imagine something (or Someone) who never changes. Even for things which don't seem to change in appearance, we KNOW they change over time. Here are a few

examples:

- Niagara Falls erodes the gorge it is forming at a rate of 4-5 feet per year. Quite slow, which amounts to a mile in about 1200-1500 years. That's change, but at a very slow rate.
- One of the newer fields of geology concerns tectonic plates, or approximately 8 continental plates on the earth which float above the earth's mantle. The theory states that these plates have shifted (and continue to shift), creating the current continents we have. Depending on which plates we are talking about, scientists estimate these plates shift from 1-10 centimeters a year, which would be equal to about a foot every 3-30 years. That's a SLOW shift!
- The sun, which seems totally constant, actually changes. The output of the sun varies in 11-year cycles. Estimates **from scientists** give the life expectancy of the sun at around 10 billion years. They say it is about 5 billion years right now, so that leaves anywhere from 5-7 billion years left. Even though that is a LONG time, scientists would still have to say that it is changing.

So we can say that even though these objects change very slowly, we still know in our mind that they do in fact CHANGE. Nothing is purely constant. That makes it hard to imagine something (or Someone) which is UNCHANGEABLE. So how can we talk about a God who never changes?

ONE REASON we say God never changes is that He has this difference from Niagara Falls, the tectonic plates, and the sun – God has no beginning or end.

“Before the mountains were born, or Thou didst give birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God.” Psalm 90:2

Simply put, God has always been...and will always be. In addition to this, there is no growth with Him. He doesn't evolve or deteriorate.

But not only has He always, always, always been. He has never, never, ever changed.

“Even they will perish, but Thou dost endure; and all of them will wear out like a garment; like clothing thou wilt change them, and they will be changed.

But Thou art the same, and Thy years will not come to an end.” Psalm 102:26-27

So as we continue, we'll talk about **WHAT IT IS about God that never changes.**

## **GOD'S CHARACTER DOESN'T CHANGE**

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever.” Hebrews 13:8

This passage from Hebrews is in a section which talks about character (showing hospitality to strangers, remembering prisoners, sexual fidelity in marriage, contentment, and conduct). God's character over decades and centuries and millennia is the same.

“Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.” James 1:17

One question or objection which some people have here is this: Doesn't the God of the

Old Testament seem very different from the God of the New Testament? In other words, isn't His character different? You may even want to ask them what they think is different about how God seems between the two testaments.

Typically this is expressed in terms that God was a "God of wrath" in the Old Testament, but a "God of love and mercy" in the New.

In answer to this, we say God "showed Himself" in different ways at different times. To say God wasn't loving in the Old Testament would be a huge misunderstanding of much of Israel's history, as well as the entire sacrificial system of forgiveness. And to say God showed no wrath in the New Testament would ignore instances like Ananias and Sapphira dropping dead for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts), or Jesus calling Peter "Satan", or much of the book of Revelation.

For those who would say that "generally speaking" God is more compassionate and grace-filled in the New Testament, we would argue that it is quite OK for God to deal with us differently, yet He remain the same. Nobody would argue that parents need to deal with their children exactly the same as the children mature. Parents are nurturing and focus on providing when children are young; and they shift to teaching and discipline and encouraging independence as youth grow up. **The parents are not necessarily changing, even though the way they relate to their children changes.** Likewise, we would say that God is not changing, even though the way He deals with us may change.

So what we find to be true about God today was true yesterday, and will be true forever. This is a great encouragement, for included in His character is:

- Patience
- Strength and power
- Love and passion
- Wisdom
- Holiness
- Forgiveness
- And many more traits

## **GOD'S COMMITMENT TO US DOESN'T CHANGE**

*"for He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.'"*

Hebrews 13:5

We celebrate marriages that last for long periods of time. A 50-year anniversary is a huge deal. To stay together that long takes commitment and dedication, not just loving feelings and emotion. You may want to talk about a relationship you had with someone over a period of time that did not last. We are so used to relationships that fade with time that (again) it's hard to imagine a commitment that is not only **eternal**, but it **doesn't change** over the duration of eternity.

Our tendency is to view God's commitment as something which rises and falls, depending on our own commitment to Him. In other words, when we're committed...He's committed. That just isn't the case.

*"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself." 2 Timothy 2:13*

## **GOD'S TRUTH DOESN'T CHANGE**

What we are saying here is that what God declares as "true" has always been and will always be "true".

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever."  
Isaiah 40:8

"Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven." Psalm 119:89

"Of old I have known from Thy testimonies, that Thou hast founded them forever."  
Psalm 119:152

So when we consider Scripture, the truths laced throughout it still stand. That applies to:

- Commands
- Promises
- Prophecies
- Principles
- Warnings
- Declarations about who God is
- Declarations about who we are

It's worth noting again here, like we mentioned earlier, that even though Scripture was written IN a different time, what it says about God and us still rings true. Give a challenge again for them to consistently spend time being saturated in God's word, to "sit under" the truths of Scripture.

## **GOD'S PLANS AND PURPOSES DON'T CHANGE**

"And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind." 1 Samuel 15:29

"God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He not said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"  
Numbers 23:19

Here again is one of those places where people may point to verses of Scripture which seem to contradict this statement. For example:

"Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart." Genesis 6:5-6

"Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, 'I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not carried out My commands.'"

“When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.” Jonah 3:10

Packer’s statement about these verses is very helpful here:

“The reference in each case is to a reversal of God’s previous treatment of particular men, consequent upon their reaction to that treatment. But there is no suggestion that this reaction was not foreseen, or that it took God by surprise, and was not provided for in His eternal plan. No change in His eternal purpose is implied when He begins to deal with a man in a new way.”  
(p. 72)

As we often do, the question we come to in wrapping up is...SO WHAT? What does God’s unchanging nature really have to do with us?

1. **The God we see in Scripture is the same God we relate to today.** That is a great comfort, and should add immense power to our time in His word.
2. **God’s love and commitment to us won’t rise and fall with our love for Him.** His DEALINGS with us may vary, depending on our faithfulness to Him (see 2 Timothy 2:12, a verse prior to the verse about God remaining faithful to us regardless). THEREFORE...
3. **We never need to worry about God “falling out of love with us”.** He doesn’t grow tired of us, or lose His passion for us.

Close out in a time of prayer, asking several youth to pray in thanks for things they are grateful for as God never changes.