

"Does God Change His Mind, & Does He do so in Job 33:14?"

"Does God Change His Mind, and does He do so in Job 33:14?" The answer is NO, God never "changes His mind" in the sense that we as humans do. God never learns more so He thinks that now He will do something else. But why would this question even arise? What verses would give us that impression? Here are just a few:

- Noah and the pre-flood world (Gen. 6:6)
- Moses and the Golden Calf debacle (Ex. 32:9-14)
- God and King Saul (1 Sam. 15:10)
- Ahab and the wrath of God (1 Kings 21:19-29)
- Hezekiah and the 15 years (Isaiah 38:1-6)
- Jonah and Nineveh (Jonah 3:4,10)

What do each of these have in common? God says one thing and then delays it. Is that changing His mind or is it patiently waiting and still arriving at the same place only delayed and emphasized?

This question is actually a piece of a much larger doctrine that deals with the realm of the attributes of God:

1. His **Eternity** (seeing everything at once vividly past, present, future);
2. His **Unchangeableness** (unchanging in His perfections, purposes, and promises);
3. His **Wisdom** (chooses best goals and means to those goals); as well as
4. His **Omniscience** (knowing Himself and all things actual and possible); and
5. The **Doctrine of Prayer** (personal communication with God) which teaches us among other things that "Prayer changes the way God acts".

There is actually an entire segment of Christianity that have struggled with these attributes of God, so we do need to dive in and see what His Word says.

What are the key attributes that have to do with God "changing His mind?"

1. His **Eternity** (that God is seeing everything at once vividly past, present, future); Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 57:15; Rev. 1:8.
2. His **Unchangeableness** (God is unchanging in His perfections, purposes, and promises); Deut. 32:4; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 1:10-12, 13:8.

3. His **Wisdom** (that God chooses best goals and means to those goals); Romans 11:33, 16:27.
4. His **Omniscience** (God is knowing Himself and all things actual and possible); Heb. 4:13; 1 John 3:20
5. The **Doctrine of Prayer** (our personal communication with God), which teaches us among other things that “Prayer changes the way God acts”. James 4:2; Luke 11:9-10; Ex. 32:9-14

Expansion of Key Doctrines

His **Eternity** (that God is seeing everything at once vividly past, present, future); Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 57:15; Rev. 1:8. **Eternity.** God’s eternity may be defined as follows: *God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in his own being, and he sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time.*¹

His **Unchangeableness** (God is unchanging in His perfections, purposes, and promises); Deut. 32:4; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 1:10-12, 13:8. **Unchangeableness.** We can define the unchangeableness of God as follows: *God is unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes, and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and he acts and feels differently in response to different situations.*² This attribute of God is also called God’s *immutability*.²

His **Wisdom** (that God chooses best goals and means to those goals); Romans 11:33, 16:27. **Wisdom.** *God’s wisdom means that God always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals.* This definition goes beyond the idea of God knowing all things and specifies that God’s decisions about what he will do are always wise decisions: that is, they always will bring about the best results (from God’s ultimate perspective), and they will bring about those results through the best possible means.³

His **Omniscience** (God is knowing Himself and all things actual and possible); Heb. 4:13; 1 John 3:20. **Knowledge (Omniscience).** God’s knowledge may be defined as follows: *God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act.*⁴

The **Doctrine of Prayer** (our personal communication with God), which teaches us among other things that “Prayer changes the way God acts”. James 4:2; Luke 11:9-10; Ex. 32:9-14. *Prayer is personal communication with God.* God wants us to pray is that in prayer God allows us as creatures to be involved in activities that are eternally important. When we pray, the work of the kingdom is advanced. In this way, prayer gives us opportunity to be involved in a significant way in the work of the kingdom and thus gives expression to our greatness as creatures made in God’s image.⁵ If we were really convinced that prayer changes the way God acts, and that God does bring about remarkable changes in the world in response to prayer, as Scripture repeatedly teaches that he does, then we would pray much more than we do. If we pray little, it is probably because we do not really believe⁶ that prayer accomplishes much at all.⁶

¹ Grudem, W. A. (2004). *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine* (p. 168). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

² The four key words (*being, perfections, purposes, promises*) used as a summary of the ways in which God is unchanging are taken from Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939, 1941), p. 58.

³ Grudem, W. A. (2004). *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine* (p. 163). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

⁴ Grudem, W. A. (2004). *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine* (p. 193). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

⁵ Grudem, W. A. (2004). *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine* (p. 190). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

⁶ Grudem, W. A. (2004). *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine* (p. 377). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

⁶ Grudem, W. A. (2004). *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine* (p. 377). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

1. Prayer Changes the Way God Acts. James tells us, “You do not have, because you do not ask” (James 4:2). He implies that failure to ask deprives us of what God would otherwise have given to us. We pray, and God responds. Jesus also says, “Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Luke 11:9–10). He makes a clear connection between seeking things from God and receiving them. When we ask, God responds.

We see this happening many times in the Old Testament. The Lord declared to Moses that he would destroy the people of Israel for their sin (Ex. 32:9–10): “But Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, “O Lord . . . Turn from your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against your people” ’ (Ex. 32:11–12). Then we read, “And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people” (Ex. 32:14). When God threatens to punish his people for their sins he declares, “If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, *and pray and seek my face* and turn from their wicked ways, *then I will hear* from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14). If and when God’s people pray (with humility and repentance), *then* he will hear and forgive them. The prayers of his people clearly affect how God acts. Similarly, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). We confess, and then he forgives.¹

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¹ Other examples of God answering prayer in Scripture are too numerous to comment on (Gen. 18:22–33; 32:26; Dan. 10:12; Amos 7:1–6; Acts 4:29–31; 10:31; 12:5–11; et al.).
⁷ Grudem, W. A. (2004). *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine* (p. 377). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.