



Links Players

GOD'S GOOD FIXEDNESS

"I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty. (Malachi 3:6-7, NIV)

MAYBE YOU NEEDED CONVINCING, but it sure looks like Bryson DeChambeau has this golf thing figured out. The "Mad Professor" isn't so much mad as genius.

They're harder to find after DeChambeau's strong summer, where he has posted three wins in his last nine starts and catapulted himself to the lead in the FedExCup Playoffs, but the man's naysayers have been plentiful throughout his young career. Whereas DeChambeau has since his junior days been convinced that he could change the way the game is played, his detractors have issued a resounding, "Oh, no you don't." Their chief claim against him is the momentum of tradition.

Change is rarely good or bad all by itself. Rather, it is good for some and not for others. Most likely DeChambeau will change *some* aspects of the game for *some* people. Same-length clubs probably aren't best for everyone. The science that fuels his approach will be financially inaccessible or too heady for some. In other words, we have no reason to fear or criticize DeChambeau's methods; no one is forcing them on us.

When it comes to the Lord of creation, however, a lack of change is excellent. You won't hear that in the public arena. There, the fixedness of God and faith traditions is sharply rebuffed. "Why can't we have what we want in our time?" is the world's essential question. "Who are you to tell me I must live such an old-fashioned existence based on ancient beliefs in a stodgy God?"

Honestly, they're right. I'm nobody to tell them this. But when God himself speaks, he leads us to a very different take. His unchanging nature is why he approaches us at all.

In the beginning, God loved his creation. Even after sin had overtaken mankind, he came to his people and said, "I have chosen you and you cannot undo this." No matter how much we rebel and wander, his covenant is there and his offer of salvation is dogged. Do we really want this to change? Do we want him to back away from his promise? No. His adamant nature is why we have any hope at all.

Opening questions What are your thoughts on a player like Bryson DeChambeau? Do you generally allow for new ideas or do you think an orthodox approach just leads to trouble? • What about in your faith—how much change is allowable there?

READING Exodus 34:5-7; Deuteronomy 7:6-10; Matthew 18:21-35

God's early claims of himself (Exodus 34)

What does God say of himself here? How significant is it that he does not change, either in his character or his actions? How can he both forgive and dispense consequences as part of his love and faithfulness?

God's unmerited affection (Deuteronomy 6)

Why did God choose to give his love to Israel? Why does he choose to give it to us? How are you glad that he loves you in spite of what worthiness or lack of worthiness you might think you possess?

The unforgiving servant (Matthew 18)

Jesus pulled the Old Testament teaching through to his time in this parable. How do we see God's love in it? How do we see his commitment to mercy?

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