



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Even If / Week 1

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

SERIES BOTTOM LINE

Everything changes but some things never change.

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students think about how they handle change and to point them toward finding peace in remembering the God who never changes.

WEEK 1 BOTTOM LINE

God doesn't change, even if . . .

SCRIPTURE

- *Hebrews 13:8 NLT*

TEACHING SLIDES

All scripture, bottom lines, and teaching points that are bolded in this script are also provided as slides in your weekly "Teaching" folder.

OPTIONAL VIDEOS

*OPTIONAL MEDIA for this week available for purchase through the XP3 HS Media Package:

- The Even If Countdown (10 minutes)
- The Even If Teaching Video – week 1

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- *Note: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced a difficult or unexpected change as a student.*
- *I was experiencing something I didn't like at all. It's called change. And that is what we're talking about in this series: Change.*

TENSION

- As a high schooler, you're used to change.
- Let's just be honest. These things are true when it comes to change:
 - Some change is awesome.
 - Some change is awful.
 - Like it or not, change happens.
 - Lastly, when it comes to change, everyone is affected.
- As uncomfortable as change is, here's the good news: We're going to talk about something today that has the potential to be a game-changer for us when it comes to the way we view change.

TRUTH

- When you open the pages of the Bible and read from the writers God used to tell His story, you'll see that they too struggled with the idea of change.
- Many of them wrestled with the question of how they could trust God when their lives seemed to be a constant series of unwanted and unexpected changes.
- But over and over again, the writers in the Bible who were dealing with so much change kept coming back to the same truth.
- Hebrews is a letter written to Christians who were learning how to follow Jesus in their Jewish way of living in the world.
- A lot of people think this letter was written to Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem who were facing persecution—which means they were treated with hostility and threatened to be killed for their religious beliefs.
- Because of that, much of the book focuses on who Jesus is and how following Him was not just a good idea, but the *best* idea—no matter how bad things get.
 - *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8 NLT).*
- To put it even more plainly: Jesus. Never. Changes. He's always the same.
- God doesn't change, even if everything around us does. It means when everything around us feels unstable, Jesus isn't.
- Have you ever seen a huge tree? What is it that keeps that tree in the ground? The tree is secured into the ground and holds steady in its place because of its roots.
- With all the change happening around it, it would be easy to think the tree would fall down and give up, but it doesn't. It's rooted in place no matter what change happens around it.
- That's what an unchanging God does for us. He keeps us rooted, or stable.
- When we're focused on Him—the One who never changes—we're able to stay steady and secure, like a tree that's unshakeable and unbreakable when everything around us feels unsteady and insecure.
- No matter what happens in our life, no matter what change we are facing, we can count on the One who never changes. We can be rooted in God.
- God doesn't change even if . . .

APPLICATION

- So, the next time you experience change in your life—and you certainly will—you don't have to be uprooted by insecurity, fear, or frustration. Instead, you can remain steady and stable by staying rooted in an unchanging God.
- To help you do that, I want you to try just one thing. **I want you to remember.**
- If God was faithful—or committed to you—in that circumstance or season of your life before, then you can stay rooted in the belief that He will be faithful again after.
- If this is hard for you, just think about a time in your life something really good happened. Write that down and remember it. Or ask your small group leader to share a story like that from their own life.

LANDING

- Wouldn't it be nice to have something unchangeable that you can focus on and trust, even when things around you change?
- God doesn't change even if . . . That's an incredible thing to remember. He was the same before, and He'll be the same after.
- Use your group time to encourage each other to remember the things about God that never change.



TEACHING SCRIPT

Even If / Week 1

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

God doesn't change, even if . . .

INTRODUCTION

2 MINUTES

When I was a freshman in high school, my dad's business fell apart. The whole country at the time was facing financial challenges. And eventually, my dad's business lost everything.

As a 13-year-old, I didn't pay much attention to my dad's work. But it didn't take long for me to notice that things were changing in my family. We moved several times over the next couple of years. And each time, we definitely downgraded! No more eating out at restaurants, and Christmas and birthdays looked a lot different. And by different, I mean there were far fewer presents, and the stuff we got wasn't nearly as nice as it used to be!

Up to that point, my dad's business had done pretty well. I was used to getting what I wanted when I wanted it. I was spoiled. I remember asking my mom at one point, "Why can't things go back to the way they were before?" When my dad's business failed, it felt like life as I knew it fell apart.

Looking back, I realize some good things came from that time. I was definitely less spoiled after that. I became more content with what I had and less materialistic. All I knew was before my dad lost his business, we had money. After, we didn't. And in the middle was a thing I didn't like at all. It's called *change*.

And *that* is what we're talking about in this series: Change.

TENSION

4 MINUTES

As a high schooler, you're used to change. You change classes all the time. You probably have different teachers this year than you did last year or last semester. You see people graduate every year, and you see new freshmen show up every year. You've seen your body change, your friend groups change, and your view on certain things change.

And let's just be honest. These things are true when it comes to change:

- **Some change is awesome.** When the change is something you want, you like it. If you ride the bench on your team, and your coach decides to move you up to the starting lineup, that's a good change, isn't it? If you've been single a while, and the girl that you're interested in finally decides to go out with you, that's a change you can approve of! (Am I right, or am I right?) If you change hairstyles and you LOVE the end result, that's a change you can get behind. If my dad's company had taken off and made *more* money when I was a freshman in high school, that would've been a change that I supported!

But it doesn't always work like that. Not all change feels like good change.

- **Some change is awful.** When the change is difficult, you don't like it. When a close friend moves away or switches schools, that's no fun. When you go through a breakup, that's not a cool change. When your family breaks apart, it's hard to embrace that kind of change. When you change hairstyles, and it *doesn't* work out, that's nobody's favorite kind of change. Some change is just bad news. How could anyone like that kind of change? It's uncomfortable.
- **Like it or not, change happens.** Change is inevitable. It's simply a part of life, especially in high school. There's no guarantee that "the way things were before" will stay the way things are. In fact, you can guarantee the opposite. The ways things were before will never stay the way things are now. And in between, change happens. Whether you like it, love it, hate it, or feel numb about it, it's a reality. You can't escape it, numb it, or make change go away.
- **Lastly, when it comes to change, everyone is affected.** Let me give you an example. A big life-altering change is if your parents get divorced. Obviously, that's a big change for them. But it affects you, too! In a major way! The same is true if a teacher or coach switches schools. If a friend moves away, that's a HUGE change for them. But there is a ripple effect. It has an impact on more than just them. When the after is different than the before, it has a way of affecting everyone, not just the people who are directly involved.

As uncomfortable as change is, here's the good news: We're going to talk about something today that has the potential to be a game-changer for us when it comes to the way we view change.

TRUTH

5 MINUTES

People have been struggling with how to handle change forever. When you open the pages of the Bible and read from the writers God used to tell His story, you'll see that they too struggled with the idea of change. They went through a lot of the same stuff we all go through: loss, broken relationships, heartbreak, uncertainty, insecurity, and so much more. And many of them wrestled with the question of how they could trust God when their lives seemed to be a constant series of unwanted and unexpected changes. Sound familiar?

But over and over again, the writers in the Bible who were dealing with so much change kept coming back to the same truth. And while many of them had a lot of helpful things to say about dealing with change, we're going to look at what the author of the book of Hebrews said.

Hebrews is a letter written to Christians who were learning how to follow Jesus in their Jewish way of living in the world. This is important to know because a lot of people think this letter was written to Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem who were facing persecution—which means, they were

treated with hostility and threatened to be killed for their religious beliefs. In fact, the persecution was so bad, some of the Jewish Christians were thinking of converting back to the Jewish religion so they wouldn't be persecuted. And because of that, much of the book is focused on who Jesus is and how following Him was not just a good idea, but the *best* idea—no matter how bad things get. We are going to pick up in the last chapter, where the author is wrapping up their letter with this incredible offer of hope to those reading, even with all the change they were facing.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8 NLT).

To put it even more plainly: Jesus. Never. Changes. He's always the same. However, He was before—loving, kind, cheering for you, just, generous—that's how He's going to be after. And in a world marked by constant change—good change and bad change—I think that's great news! Because that means **God doesn't change even if everything around us does. It means when everything around us feels unstable, Jesus isn't. When everything around us feels inconsistent, Jesus isn't. When everyone around us seems different or like they can't understand, Jesus does.**

So why is that so important? Let me explain it to you this way. Have you ever seen a huge tree? Maybe you have one in your backyard right now or you've seen one at a park or on TV. I'm talking about one of those big, sturdy trees with tons of branches and big bulky leaves. What is it that keeps that tree in the ground? That tree is secured into the ground and holds steady in its place because of its roots. So, every season when the weather changes—when the wind blows, the ice comes, the rain falls, the sun beams down, the fog covers, the drought hits—the tree isn't moved. With all that change happening around it, it would be easy to think the tree would just fall down and give up, but it doesn't. It's rooted in place no matter what change happens around it.

And that's what an unchanging God does for us. He keeps us rooted, or stable. **When we're focused on Him—the One who never changes—we're able to stay steady and secure, like a tree that's unshakeable and unbreakable when everything around us feels unsteady and insecure. God doesn't change when everything else does.** Because everything changes, but some things never change. And that's God.

When we are rooted in God and are experiencing change, it does not mean that we are all of a sudden happy with every difficult circumstance change can bring. Instead, it looks like knowing truth (that God's commitment to you never changes) and experiencing disappointment/difficulty *at the same time*. We can know God's love and purpose and presence don't change and that He can use any change (even the bad change) for good because He is always faithful. And that never changes.

No matter what happens in our life, no matter what change we are facing, we can count on the One who never changes. We can be rooted in God. When nothing else feels stable, God is. And when we have trust in a God that never changes, whatever difficulty change brings, there is a peace we can experience anyway.

Here's a very simple phrase that I'd love for you to remember:

God doesn't change, even if . . .

He's the solid, unmovable ground on which we can root our lives. And that's why, no matter what change is happening around us, we can remain secure when our eyes are fixed on Him. It was true back then when the writer of Hebrews said it, and it's still true today.

APPLICATION

4 MINUTES

But what does that mean for you?

It means:

- Even if . . . things are unpredictable or out of your control, God's ability to hold the whole world never changes.
- Even if . . . things will never be the same because of death, permanent injury, or chronic health issue, God's availability to hear your prayers never changes.
- Even if . . . what lies ahead is exciting (because you made the team, beasted the audition, aced the driver's test, etc.), the amount of God's love for you never changes.
- Even if . . . what lies ahead is new territory (transitioning schools, graduating, starting a new job), God's promise to be with you through it all never changes.
- Even if . . . what lies ahead is scary, God's reliability to stead you never changes.

And on top of all of that, you can keep in mind that one of the things about God that never changes is His love for you no matter what change you are facing. He will ALWAYS love you. He will ALWAYS care for you. He's with you when things are going steady and well, and He's with you when things change and for everything in between. So, the next time you experience change in your life—and you certainly will—you don't have to be uprooted by insecurity, fear, or frustration. Instead, **you can remain steady and stable by staying rooted in an unchanging God.**

To help you do that, I want you to try just one thing. **I want you to remember.**

I want you to remember a time that God was faithful to you in the past.

I want you to remember a time that you felt God's love in your life.

I want you to remember a time you saw God's goodness.

Maybe it was coming to this church and finding your small group. Maybe it was at camp. Maybe it was when your mom was really sick, and a whole bunch of people supported you by making your family meals and helped out in a million little ways. Maybe it was when your dad lost his job, and even though it was really scary, you grew closer as a family.

Remember those things in your life. Write a few of them down. And then, remember that the same God who was there when those things happened is the same God who is with you now. **If God was faithful—or committed to you—in that circumstance or season of your life before, then you can stay rooted in the belief that He will be faithful again after.**

For those of you who aren't sure what you believe about God or don't know if you've seen Him be faithful, that's okay! Or for those who are in the middle of some difficult change where it is hard to even imagine God being faithful to you in the middle of it, that's okay, too! All of us have been there at some point. Just think about a time in your life when something really good happened. Write that down and remember it. Or ask your small group leader to share a story like that from

their own life. I know they all have plenty of examples of how God has come through for them before. Use those stories as a starting point to consider the fact that God might be working in and around your life, too.

LANDING

1 MINUTE

Wouldn't it be nice to have something unchangeable that you can focus on and trust, even when things around you change? Wouldn't it give you confidence knowing that no matter how unstable things feel in your life, you have an unshakeable rock who always loves you and never changes?

God doesn't change, even if . . . That's an incredible thing to remember. He was the same before, and He'll be the same after. As we head to group, remember, this is one of the reasons why we meet together. To encourage each other to remember the things that are true about God when nothing else feels secure. Use your group time to encourage each other to remember the things about God that never change.



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
