



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Even If / Week 2

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

SERIES BOTTOM LINE

Everything changes but some things never change.

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To remind students that God is with them in change and to give them the space to be honest with Him (and others) about the way they feel about change.

WEEK 2 BOTTOM LINE

God is with you, even if . . .

SCRIPTURE

- *Isaiah 43:2 NIV*
- *John 16:33 NIV*
- *John 16:7 NIV*

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 2

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- *Note: Tell a personal story about at time you looked forward to a change in your life only to have something happen that made it feel like more of a negative change.*

TENSION

- Today, I want to talk specifically about negative change. This is the kind of change we face that we don't want, or wish didn't happen, or see in a really negative light.
- When something changes in a way we don't want it to, it feels a lot like something has broken in our lives.
- And the bad news is, sometimes change means that whatever has broken simply can't be fixed.
- When that happens, some of you may even wonder this: Why hasn't God stepped in to fix the thing that feels broken?
- It's important for us to know that while God hasn't promised to make everything go the way we want it to, He has promised us something else.

TRUTH

- The Bible is a collection of writings, and it's divided into two sections: The Old Testament, which are all the parts written before Jesus came to Earth, and the New Testament, which includes Jesus and everything that came afterwards.
- In a lot of ways, the Old Testament tells the story of God's relationship with the people of Israel.
- God set apart a people group—starting with a guy named Abraham that grew family by family, generation by generation. It was through that group of people—all those generations of families—that God's Son, Jesus would be born.
- These people were really important to God, but they had a problem. They kept breaking things—mainly, their relationship with God.
- Every time the people of Israel got in trouble, they asked God to fix it. Sometimes He did, and sometimes He didn't. But either way, He promised them something they could hold onto no matter what.
 - *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze (Isaiah 43:2 NIV).*
- In other words, you *will* find yourself in difficult situations. It's not a matter of *if* you do, but *when* you do. You will face change that is hard to handle.
- So, if that's true, what does God promise us when those things happen? He promises us that He will be *with* us.
- Hundreds of years after the book of Isaiah was written, one of the last things Jesus said to His followers, hours before He was arrested and put on the cross to die, was this:
 - *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33 NIV).*
- Jesus told His disciples they could take comfort in the fact that He had overcome the difficulty they would face.
- His very arrival on earth was to signify that God was with us! And when we know that God is with us, we can find the courage to face difficult challenges and circumstances.

- Just before Jesus tells this to His disciples, Jesus echoes the message of Isaiah of God being with us when He tells His followers,
 - “. . . it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” (John 16:7 NIV).
- The Advocate, the Helper, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit was coming in Jesus’ place—meaning, no matter what happened to Jesus, *God was with them*.
- No matter what you’re going through, God is with you, even if . . .

APPLICATION

- When life changes and it feels like things are broken and can’t be fixed, that hurts. After a change like that, it seems like things will never go back to how they were before.
- In those moments, there are a few things that I’d love for you to do:
 - Be honest.
 - Run toward God, not away from Him.

LANDING

- Change isn’t easy. And some of it is flat-out painful. But remember, everything changes, but some things never change.
- God’s commitment to you, God’s love for you, God’s availability to hear you out never changes.
- God is with you, even if . . .



TEACHING SCRIPT

Even If / Week 2

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

God is with you, even if . . .

INTRODUCTION

2 MINUTES

Let me start today with a very important question . . .

How many of you *reallly* can't wait until you can drive?

Now, I recognize that a lot of you are already in the driving game. That's exciting! Some of you are completely terrified of the idea of driving—no judgment from me, that's totally normal. But then there's a group of you who simply cannot wait for the day you have a driver's license in your hand. Even if you don't yet have a vehicle to drive, just knowing that it would be *possible* for you to drive to the nearest gas station gets you completely pumped!

That's how I was in high school. Because my family had very little money, I had 0% hope that I'd get a car of my own. All I wanted was the opportunity to drive my mom's car somewhere *without* her in it! I was so excited about it, in fact, that my mom knew she could use it against me. Every time I got in trouble, she delayed my ability to get my driver's license by one week.

Seven months after I turned 16, I got my license.

Despite the delay, I was beyond happy when the day arrived. And I did exactly what I had been dreaming of doing—I drove my mom's car to the nearest gas station. (Mainly because that's as far as my dad would let me drive by myself.) And just like I hoped, it felt amazing to be in a car by myself!

And then came the biggest surprise of my life. Apparently, my dad got the deal of a lifetime on an old, cheap car which became MY car! For a year and a half, that car and I were inseparable.

Until I got into a car accident. I was fine, but my car was done forever.

And just like that, something I cared about a *lot* was broken. And as bad as I wanted to fix it, I couldn't. Now is the moment when all of you—in your sad voices—say, “Awwwwwee!” Thank you for your sympathy!

TENSION

4 MINUTES

Now I realize that I just opened up today with a sad story. Sorry for the downer! But I did it to illustrate something.

In this series, *Even If*, we're talking about change. And like we talked about last time, some change is great and exciting and exactly what we want—like when I got the car I wasn't expecting! And other change is difficult, challenging and hard to handle—like when I wrecked my car. But the thing that is true with all change is that the "After" always looks different from the "Before." Before I wrecked my car, things were great. After I wrecked it, I was back to being driven around by my mom.

Today, I want to talk specifically about negative change. This is the kind of change we face that we don't want, or wish didn't happen, or see in a really negative light. It's the change we wish we could do without. See, when something changes in a way we don't want it to, it feels a lot like something has broken in our lives, like a loss of what could have been or what we hoped would be. And when that happens, often the first thing we try to do is fix it. We want things to go back to the way they were. But the bad news is, a lot of times that isn't possible. **Sometimes change means that whatever has broken simply can't be fixed.** And that can leave us feeling sad, angry, frustrated, and even helpless.

For example . . .

- Maybe for you it was a breakup with your boyfriend or girlfriend, and no matter how much you wanted to get back together, it just wasn't going to happen.
- Maybe your parents separated, and you hoped they'd work it out and fix their relationship, but they ended up getting divorced instead.
- Maybe you used to be the star player on your team, but this year someone else took the starting spot.
- Maybe someone's perception or judgment of you changed and you can't do anything about it.
- You can't change the fact that you moved to a new house or that you have to go to a new school.
- You can't change the fact that you failed that test.

Whatever the cause, you can't fix the changes that make your life feel a little bit broken right now, and you're afraid things will never be good like they were before. Feeling that way causes all kinds of difficult emotions.

In fact, some of you may even wonder this: **Why hasn't God stepped in to fix the thing that feels broken?** You wish there was another chapter in the story you're experiencing, but it feels like God has closed the book. You wish this situation were simply like a comma in a sentence—just a pause until the sentence continues. Instead, it feels like God has put a period, which means the sentence is over. The story you are experiencing feels derailed in a way that can't be fixed. For some of you, this may be the reason why you're unsure about God. You wonder why He won't step in and fix the broken things in and around your life.

If you've ever felt like that, just know that you're not alone. Almost every person who's ever experienced a difficult or painful change in their life has thought the same things. That's why it's important for us to know that while God hasn't promised to make everything go the way we want it to, He has promised us something else. And this promise can be huge for us when we face difficult change in our lives.

TRUTH

7 MINUTES

Today, we're going to take it way back and talk about a group of people who, believe it or not, are an important part of our faith today. As we learn about them, we actually learn a lot about what God is like.

The Bible is a collection of writings, and it's divided into two sections: The Old Testament, which are all the parts written before Jesus came to Earth, and the New Testament, which includes Jesus and everything that came afterwards. In a lot of ways, the Old Testament tells the story of God's relationship with the people of Israel. Why is that significant to us today? I'll give you the short version.

God set a part a people group—starting with a guy named Abraham that grew family by family, generation by generation. It was a group of people God wanted to live in a different way than the rest of the ancient world around them. That different way of relating to a loving God highlighted God's uniqueness in a time and place where other gods were not kind, loving, or looking out for the interests of others. It was through that group of people—all those generations of families—that God's Son, Jesus would be born. So, the nation of Israel was a really, big deal to God. They were a part of His plan to free and save the whole world through Jesus.

But this group of people had a problem. They kept breaking things—mainly, their relationship with God. Even though God chose them as a family for a really important purpose—bringing Jesus into the world and revealing God's character once and for all, they still got caught up doing really selfish and stupid things that not only got them into trouble, but also went against God's plan. In fact, other nations would defeat and capture them in their rebellion. This happened over and over again. This was a broken thing, a negative change, that they couldn't fix.

Every time the people of Israel got in trouble, they asked God to fix it. Sometimes He did, and sometimes He didn't. But either way, even if He didn't, He promised them something they could hold onto no matter what. And it's the same thing He promises us. This is what God spoke through the prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament:

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze (Isaiah 43:2 NIV).

Now, one thing we can't skip over is the way this is worded.

When you pass through the waters.

When you pass through the rivers.

When you walk through the fire.

In other words, you *will* find yourself in difficult situations. It's not a matter of ***if*** you do, but ***when*** you do. **You will face change that is hard to handle.**

So, if that's true, what does God promise us when those things happen? **He promises us that He will be *with us*.**

Now, maybe you hear that and think, “Cool. But I would rather He just fix it. If He really loved me, if God was really in control, these difficult changes wouldn’t happen.” You wouldn’t be the first to think that. Honestly, all of us would rather have an easy life than a life that brings hard-to-handle change. Sometimes I kind of wish God would have said something else like, *no matter how hurt you are, or no matter how bad your situation is, I’m going to fix it. I’m going to make things go back to the way they were before, and it will all be great.* But that’s not what He said. He doesn’t promise a quick fix or an “all better outcome.” In fact, hundreds of years after the book of Isaiah was written, one of the last things Jesus said to His followers, hours before He was arrested and put on the cross to die was this:

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33 NIV).

Jesus told His disciples they could take comfort in the fact that He had overcome the difficulty they would face. He didn’t shy away from the fact that we’ll face troubling changes in this life. But He told us to take heart—to have courage and remain strong—because He has overcome the world. He’s bigger than anything we face or struggle with! In fact, His very arrival on earth was to signify that God was with us! The name Immanuel means God with us! And **when we know that God is with us, we can find the courage to face difficult challenges and circumstances, and also share our grief with God when those changes happen.**

But it’s even better than that. Just before Jesus tells this to His disciples, Jesus echoes the message of Isaiah of God being with us, when He tells His followers,

“. . . it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” (John 16:7 NIV).

In other words, Jesus knew His time on earth was coming to an end. But that didn’t mean His friends would be alone. The Advocate, the Helper, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit was coming in His place. Meaning, no matter what happened to Jesus, *God was with them.* Even if the circumstances around them changed, God didn’t. And God was present. In this world we will have trouble, but we will never be alone. And no matter what the change brings, we can take everything we are thinking and feeling about it to the One who is with us through it all.

God is with you, even if . . .

No matter what you’re going through, **God is with you, even if . . .**

- you feel hurt over what your friends did to you
- you feel sad because life will never go back to the way it was before
- you can’t imagine a way through all of this
- you can’t tell how things will turn out

God is with you.

And if you think about it, that really is an amazing promise. Because when I’m hurting from the changes life has brought me, the last thing I want to feel is alone. I want to know someone is going to be with me. Sometimes just knowing someone is there for you can make you feel a lot better. And when that someone is God, who is bigger than anything else that’s happening around us, that’s a big source of comfort—which is exactly the word Jesus uses to describe what the Holy Spirit will be for us.

APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

Things happen in life that we don't expect. When life changes and it feels like things are broken and can't be fixed, that hurts. After a change like that, it seems like things will never go back to how they were before. In those moments, there are a few things that I'd love for you to do:

1. **Be honest.** God is a big God. But He's also a God full of compassion, hope, and comfort. Just like the people of Israel, He knows that you'll pass through waters, rivers, and fire. Like Jesus said, He knows that "in this world you will have trouble." He sees everything, so you can talk to Him about it. You can be honest about how you feel, good or bad. You can be honest about the things that you hope He'll fix.

Sometimes, He uses other people to allow us to experience his presence when we go through tough times. So maybe a good start is for you to be honest with someone else. Look for a trustworthy person who cares about you. For example, having a one-on-one conversation with your small group leader may be a great idea for some of you right now.

2. **Run toward God, not away from Him.** Trust that He is with you. Even if things don't seem to be turning around or getting fixed, choose to believe that His promise of being with you in all of it is true and can be trusted. When things go bad, He is with you. When things change, He is with you. When nothing seems to be getting better, He is with you. It may not be the "fix" you are looking for, but practice believing that it is enough for right now to help you get you through whatever you're facing.

LANDING

1 MINUTE

Change isn't easy. And some of it is flat-out painful. But remember, everything changes, but some things never change. God's commitment to you, God's love for you, God's availability to hear you out never changes. Now, imagine if you started living like you knew you didn't have to go through it alone. What if you knew that you weren't alone in the middle of the difficulty? God loves you so much. Not only that, **God is with you, even if . . .**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
