

Subject to Change / Week 1

Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you" (Hebrews 13:5 NLT).

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

Life is subject to change. Which is obvious when you think about it. We all have expectations for what life should look like. And then one day, life completely rearranges things on us. It breaks the rules and does the unexpected.

Change can be a good or bad thing. For example, maybe you made the team this tryout, but you're not a starter. Okay, you'll take that life change. But shortly after making the team, you got injured. *Not* a great life change. Or maybe your body went through some changes. Upside? You're taller. Bad news? Acne! Maybe you've made one of the best friends you've ever had. Or maybe you lost a really good friend because of a misunderstanding that can't seem to be fixed.

Change can be awesome or awful. But either way, I think we all struggle with it for a couple of reasons . . .

- 1. It forces us into the unknown.** Moving to a new town or school could be an awesome experience . . . but we don't know yet. Changes don't arrive with a guaranteed set of terms and conditions. So, until we know how things turn out, it can be pretty stressful.
- 2. We lose perspective.** Change can be emotional. In fact, if it's a big enough change, it can feel like it's the end of the world!
- 3. It causes us to realize we're not in control.** If you think about it, we spend a lot of time and energy trying to control our outcomes. We study to make good grades. We practice our sports and instruments. We take the right electives so we'll get into the right college. We do everything we can to avoid arguments with friends or family.

And although we never *really* have control of our lives, we feel it more deeply when we're in the middle of change. And since all of us are subject to change at some point, we're all subject to realizing that we can't make everything in life fit into a nice perfect box.

And so, the question we need to tackle *isn't*, "How do we avoid change?" Because change is happening, whether we're ready for it not!

The real question is, "How can we make it *through* change?" Fortunately, the Bible has some things to say about this very question. And what the Bible says can comfort and carry us through anything life throws our way! But before we get there, let's get some backstory...

Thousands of years ago, God chose a group of people, the Israelites, to be His people. And although God is perfect, the Jewish people *obviously* couldn't behave perfectly. Despite that, God still wanted them to live differently than every other people group in the world. **So, He gave them a set of laws on how to live great lives while setting themselves apart.** It started with ten, but it eventually became 613 laws. (Yeah, that's a lot!)

Fast-forward a few centuries to when something revolutionary happened. God entered the world as a real, flesh-and-blood person—Jesus. And He shared the amazing truth that His love wasn't just for the Jewish people, but for the whole world.

And then, after being put to death and demonstrating just how great His love was, *Jesus came back to life. And when Jesus defeated death, it changed everything.* It was *the* game-changing, history-making moment!

But then Jesus left the world. And once life returned to somewhat normal, the Jewish people, who had become followers of Jesus, were shaken up. Their religion, which they had faithfully practiced every day for generations, went from 613 rules to . . . *one* relationship? What were the rules now?

To say they had concerns was an understatement! So, a letter was sent to address them. It's called *Hebrews*. It was written to Jewish people who followed Jesus. And while we're not sure who wrote it, the author clearly had a deep understanding of God's plan for His people and mankind. As the letter is ending and the author is writing his final thoughts, he makes this statement:

Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you" (Hebrews 13:5 NLT).

That may seem like a weird thing to hear now, but it made sense at the time. Being a Jewish Jesus-follower back then wasn't easy. One of the changes that came with following Jesus meant you were in danger of losing property and money. You could lose everything! But even with the scary threat of potential change like this, the author reminds Jewish believers of something they already knew to be true because they had heard it all of their lives: God would never abandon or fail them.

Basically, the writer is saying, "*Hey, a lot is changing. I get that. But God's character hasn't changed at all!*"

The writer continues. **A few verses later, he makes a similar statement that I think could help all of us when we're facing a life that is subject to change . . .**

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In other words, even though Jesus had changed the game, *Jesus Himself had not* changed. **He was the representation of the same God they had been following since they first encountered Him.** Sure, the way they lived and worshipped was changing in a major way. Instead of following hundreds of rules, they were now free to simply follow one person: *Jesus*.

To us, those changes seem awesome. But to the Jewish people at the time, they were unsettling. Remember, in the middle of change, you have no clue how things are going to turn out. That's why the writer of *Hebrews* reminds the Jewish believers that even though *a lot* is changing, they could trust that Jesus Himself does not change. He wasn't some random guy showing up to break their system. He was the same God who was present when the system was created!

And that's a big deal because they had a history with God. They'd experienced ups and downs with Him. They had experienced God's faithfulness through tough times in their past. And the same God they (or their ancestors) had trusted in the past was the same God they could trust now. **Their circumstances had changed, but God's character hadn't changed one bit.**

They hopefully learned something huge. Something that applies to you and I today . . .

LIFE CHANGES. GOD DOESN'T.

Just think about how freeing that is. Because while everything around you is subject to change, and it makes you feel out of control, you can walk with the One who is actually *in* control. Jesus is a Friend who never changes. He was good thousands of years ago, and He's still good today.

Your circumstances will change, but His character never will.

Change is going to happen. Sometimes it will be good and sometimes it won't. But even though life is unpredictable, we can always trust in the One who is predictable. Life changes. God doesn't. He's the same loving God that He's always been.

Think of some areas in your life where you can begin to lean on this reality. Maybe it's at home, at school, or in a relationship. Because you can't avoid change, but you can make it through change. Because even though life changes, Jesus doesn't.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Good or bad, what's one way your life has changed over the past year?
2. Why do you think we're tempted to avoid change, even when it's potentially good?
3. How does it make you feel to know that even when your circumstances change, God doesn't change?
4. Describe a time of change when God came through for you or someone you know.
5. When facing change, how is it helpful to remember that God is the same today as He was back then?
6. Think of someone you know who might be going through a time of change. How can you remind them (without diminishing what they're facing) that despite the change, God *doesn't* change?