

DOUBTING THOMAS

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: JOHN 20:19-31



Jesus calls to faith all those who are His.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

The disciples believed –After appearing to Mary outside the tomb, Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Next He appeared again to Peter, who then informed the others (see Luke 24:34). Even so, the disciples were huddled in a room, afraid of what the Jews might do to them. It is likely the soldiers had already begun to spread the rumor that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body. While they were gathered, Jesus, in His glorified body, came into the room even though the door was locked. Luke tells us they thought He was a ghost, so they doubted. Jesus showed them His hands and side. Luke tells us that Jesus opened their minds so they could understand. Once they understood, they were overjoyed.

Jesus breathed on the disciples, and they received the Holy Spirit. This was not a symbol of what was to come later. The disciples were converted, and the Spirit of God dwelled in them. They were then commissioned to spread the gospel, but as Luke 24:48 records, Jesus told them to remain until they were clothed with the Spirit's power.

Thomas believed – Thomas had been absent during Jesus' first visit and told his fellow disciples he would not believe unless he could touch the wounds of Christ himself. One week later Jesus appeared again and granted Thomas' request. Instantly Thomas' doubts faded and he immediately believed. The words of Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" from John 20:28, declare his faith in Jesus not merely as a great man but as God. Jesus commended Thomas and left us with a great encouragement to faith in John 20:29 by saying, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

We are among those who have not seen but do believe. Jesus was not harsh with Thomas. Rather than rebuke Thomas, Jesus called him to faith.

Will we believe? -- John 20:30,31 adds a bit of commentary. John tells us he did not record every miracle of Jesus but that what was recorded was written so that we might believe. Thomas would not believe until he could see for himself. In His kindness, God reaches out to us in the same way through His Word. The Bible is more than a recollection of history. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is living. When we read the Word, the Spirit of God uses it to transform our lives. In Romans 1:16 Paul said the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

After His resurrection, Jesus opened the minds of His disciples to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). Jesus explained that He Himself was the central theme of Scripture. Jesus very kindly introduced the disciples to the truth. He did not rebuke them for their former doubts; He called them to faith.

Thomas did not believe. He was in need of Gospel truth. Jesus knew what Thomas needed and showed him His nail-scarred hands. Jesus called Thomas to faith and opened His mind. Thomas immediately responded by addressing Jesus as God.

Thomas doubted, but when confronted with the risen Lord who was slain for our sins, Thomas believed. Like Thomas, we need to be reminded of Jesus' death that we, too, might believe. Though we have not seen, we have heard the Word and we can believe.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

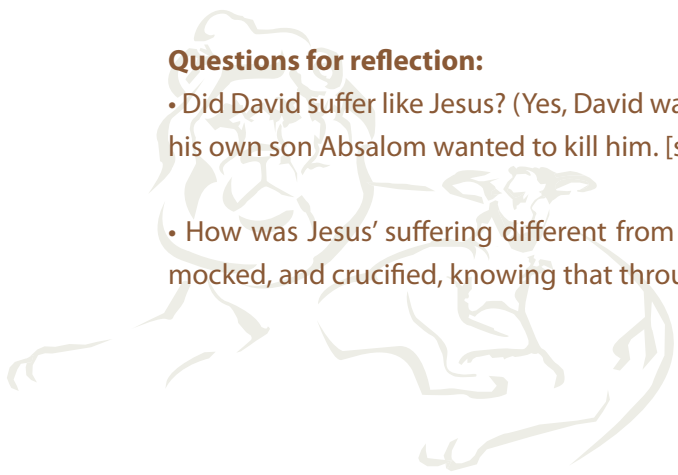
Bible Passage: Psalm 38:11,12

Connecting the passage to Christ:

David's prayer points forward to another king in the line of David who would suffer similarly. Jesus was deserted by His companions. Even those who followed Jesus watched from a distance (see Matthew 27:55). The religious rulers plotted to ruin Jesus and paid Judas to betray Him.

Questions for reflection:

- Did David suffer like Jesus? (Yes, David was rejected and had to run for his life from King Saul, and even his own son Absalom wanted to kill him. [see 2 Samuel 15:10-14].)
- How was Jesus' suffering different from that of David? (Jesus allowed himself to be taken, beaten, mocked, and crucified, knowing that through His sacrifice He was bringing us life and forgiveness.)



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SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

IS IT REAL?

Supplies:

two varieties of the most realistic silk flowers you can find and two varieties of real flowers that match them closely enough to help confuse the children as to which are real (Do not allow the children to see the flowers prior to the exercise.)

This is to help the children understand why the disciples would have wanted to touch Jesus.

Place the flowers all together in a vase. Ask the children if the flowers are real flowers or if they are fake flowers. (They should struggle to guess.)

Ask them what would help them to know if they were real or not? (They will likely say "smell" or "touch". Invite a volunteer to come up and touch the flowers and give their evaluation. If they do not distinguish that there are some real and some fake, ask for a second volunteer and then a third until someone guesses them all correctly.)

Read through the account of Thomas noting that even before the disciples asked, Jesus showed His hands and side to them willingly (see John 20:20).

Thomas' request was not so outrageous. It was the arrogant tone of his request that revealed the true nature of his heart. We can still long to touch the wounds of Christ for it is by these wounds that we have received forgiveness and life.



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PLACE YOUR FAITH IN ME

Supplies:

- two eggs
- solid plastic cup
- water
- four foot length of strong cord

This exercise is to help the class understand the different ways we use the word "believe".

Drill two holes through the cup, one directly across from the other so that you can insert a cord, like a handle, for this exercise. Don't use a cheap disposable cup as it might break during the exercise.

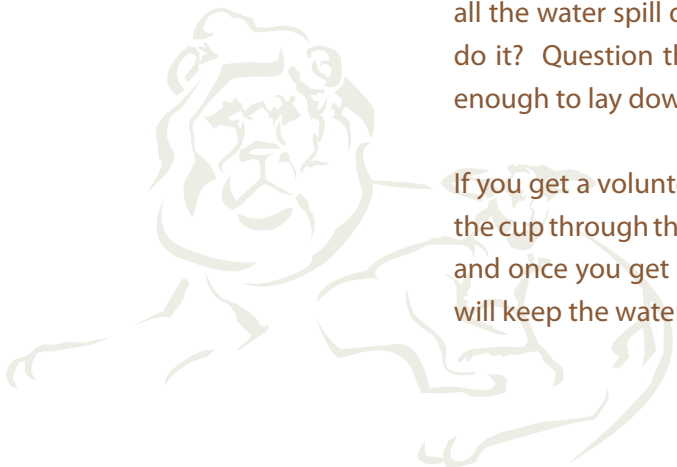
Explain to the class that you are going to practice two tricks that you have been working on. Tell them that you have been practicing throwing up an egg into the air and clapping before you catch it. Ask them how many times they believe you can clap before you catch the egg. Ask each student for a number and write down the names of those with the highest number.

Ask the class if you can have one practice. Throw the egg up in the air and clap a large number of claps and do not catch the egg but let it fall and break on the floor. Clean up the mess as you apologize and thank them for the practice. Then ask the student who believes you can do the highest number of claps to come forward. Tell the student that to really make it interesting you are going to have him lie down under your trick so that if you miss, the egg is going to hit them right in the face. (Hopefully they will object and then you can say, "But you told me that you believed in me!" Go to the class as witnesses asking them if they heard him say that he believed you could do it, that he even suggested the number himself. Remind them of the wording of your question.)

Excuse the volunteer and tell the class you are going to do another trick instead.

Fill your cup up halfway with water. Ask the class how many believe you can turn the cup upside down without spilling a drop. Turn the cup upside down and let all the water spill out. Clean up the mess then ask the class who believes you can do it? Question their use of the word believe and make sure they really believe enough to lay down under your trick.

If you get a volunteer, fill the cup up halfway with water and tie the strong cord to the cup through the holes like a handle. The idea is to swing the cup like a pendulum and once you get enough speed, take it all the way around. The centrifugal force will keep the water inside the cup.



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Make sure to practice this at home. When you do it in class over a student, stand on a chair to ensure you do not hit the student in the head with the cup. Place the student's head to your left and swing clockwise. That way if you do hit them, you will only hit their shoes.

- Talk to the class about the difference between the following two meanings of belief.

Believe #1 – You acknowledge that something is fact or you think it is real.

Believe #2 – You place your whole faith and confidence in a particular fact.

I TOLD YOU BEFORE

Supplies:

- Bibles for the class
- prizes for the winning team

Place the girls and boys on opposite teams. Tell them that their challenge is to find the verses where Jesus predicted His death or His resurrection. The team with the most scriptures discovered is the winner.

Here is a list for your reference:

Matthew 17:9

Mark 8:31

Mark 9:9

Mark 9:31

Mark 10:34

John 2:19

John 3:14

John 8:28

John 12:32

In addition to these, there are several other places where those accusing Jesus repeated His words about being raised from the dead. Feel free to accept them as well.

Take the class through these scriptures to help them to understand Jesus was simply following God's well thought out plan to save us from our sin.



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PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

Supplies:

pencil and paper

Draw a picture of Jesus speaking to Thomas.

FOR THE OLDER GRADES

COMPARE THE WORDS OF CHRIST

Supplies:

paper and pencil

Compare Luke 24:45-47 with the following Old Testament Scriptures and what was written about Jesus:

Psalm 22:15-22, Isaiah 53:9-12, Psalms 16:9-11.

How can seeing the plan of God prophesied before it happened, build our faith? (It is truly amazing to read the above prophetic passages and realize they were written hundreds of years prior to Christ's birth. That builds our faith that God is in control and this all really happened.)

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Believe – The word “believe” as it is used in reference to Jesus, does not simply mean that a person acknowledges something to be a fact. It implies a wholehearted trust in that fact. James 2:19 says, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder.”

The demons acknowledged that Jesus was the Son of God but they did not place their wholehearted trust in Him. It is not enough for us to believe Jesus rose from the dead. We must place our trust in Him and His work on the cross. When we place our trust in Him is when we truly believe.

