

Jesus and the Doubter

BIBLE PASSAGE: John 20:24-29

MAIN POINT: Jesus showed His hands and side to Thomas

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is our mission as believers? Our mission as believers is to make disciples of all nations by the power of the Spirit.

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(10–15 MINUTES)

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Leader BIBLE STUDY

Jesus' followers had seen Jesus alive! Two disciples met Jesus as they were walking to Emmaus, and then Jesus appeared to a group of His disciples as they met together in a locked room. But one of the disciples, Thomas, had missed out. He wasn't there when Jesus appeared. He hadn't seen Jesus for himself.

So despite his friends' claims that the Lord was risen, Thomas doubted. In fact, he refused to believe. (John 20:25) Witnesses testified that they had seen Jesus, but Thomas wanted physical evidence. He lacked faith and was stubborn in his unbelief.

More than a week passed, and Thomas was with the other disciples in a room. Again, the doors were locked for their safety. Much like before, Jesus appeared before the disciples and said, “Peace be with you.”

This time, Thomas was there. Jesus told Thomas to believe. He urged him not only to look, but to feel Jesus’ wounds for himself. Here, Jesus gave grace to Thomas. He gave Thomas the physical proof he was looking for. Jesus was no ghost; Jesus was alive!

Thomas immediately believed, and Jesus said, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (John 20:29). The Bible says that God is pleased when we have faith. (Heb. 11:6)

As you teach kids, explain the meaning of the word *faith*: “the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Faith is believing without seeing. It is trusting that God is who He says He is, and He will do what He says He will do. (See Num. 23:19.)

Faith cannot be mustered up on your own; it is a gift from God. (Eph. 2:8-9) Pray that God would grant kids faith to believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior.



Additional resources for each session are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

The BIBLE STORY

Bible Storytelling Tips

Jesus and the Doubter

John 20:24-29

- **Make it active:**

Shrug your shoulders and shake your head each time you say *doubt* or *unbeliever*. Point to your eyes each time you say *see* or *look*. Hold up both hands when you say *hands*. Encourage kids to do the actions with you.

- **Play out the story:**

Invite one kid to be Thomas and another to be Jesus. Let them silently act out the story, moving around the front of the room to simulate the interaction between Thomas and Jesus.

Thomas was one of Jesus' disciples, but he **was not with the others when Jesus visited them. The other disciples kept telling him, "We have seen Jesus!"**

But Thomas doubted. He said, "I don't believe you! I want to see and touch the holes in His hands and His side, or I will never believe!"

Eight days later, the disciples were indoors again. This time, Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, **Jesus came in and stood among them. He said, "Peace to you!"**

Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and look at My hands. Reach out and touch My side. **Don't be an unbeliever; believe!"**

Thomas did believe. "My Lord and my God!" he said.

Jesus said, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Those who believe in Me without seeing Me are blessed."

Christ Connection: Thomas saw Jesus for himself. He saw that Jesus had been raised from the dead and was alive. He saw Jesus' scars from the cross, where Jesus died for our sins. We have not seen Jesus, but Jesus said if we believe in Him without seeing Him, we are blessed.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
ADVENTURE!**

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover how God's Word can help them grow in the gospel. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Introduce THE STORY

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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is our mission as believers? Our mission as believers is to make disciples of all nations by the power of the Spirit.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. As kids arrive, guide them to write on a large sheet of paper something they doubt is real.

SAY • Sometimes things we doubt are real. Maybe they seem impossible, or we have never seen them with our own eyes, but they exist. Today we are going to learn more about Jesus and one of His disciples who doubted that Jesus rose again.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “Do You Believe?” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the “Do You Believe?” activity page. Instruct them to work with friends to answer each of the four questions.

SAY • We don’t have to see everything with our own eyes to believe in it. In today’s story, a disciple named Thomas had a hard time believing that Jesus was alive. He wanted to see Jesus with his own eyes.



Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: I doubt it

Invite the kids to sit in a circle while one child steps out

in the hall with another adult. While that child is away, perform a hidden talent (splits, back flip, 20 push-ups, and so forth). When the child returns, the class will tell the child what you did while she was gone. The child must decide if she believes the other kids by saying “I doubt it” (if she does not believe) or “no doubt about it” (if she does believe). Perform it again to prove it to her.

SAY • Some things can be difficult to believe. You may hear about them from your friends, but until you see them for yourself, you have a hard time believing they are real. That’s how the disciple Thomas felt in our Bible story. All of the other disciples had seen Jesus alive, but Thomas wasn’t there, so he didn’t believe. We’ll learn what happened in our Bible story.

OPTION 2: True or false

Give each child an index card and tell him to write his name on top. Kids must then write one thing about themselves that is true and one thing that is false. Designate one side of the room as true and the opposite side as false. As you read each statement, the kids have to decide if it is true or false by going to that side of the room. Read at least one thing off each student’s card.

- index cards
- pencils

SAY • We learned many new things about our friends in class. Even though you may know your friends well, it could be hard to choose what is true and what is false. Thomas had a hard time believing the fact that Jesus was alive. We’ll see what happened in our story.

Transition to teach the story

Teach THE STORY

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Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

[Leader enters wearing a solid-colored polo shirt and khakis, perhaps in the colors of a local school your students attend.]

LEADER • Hey, everyone! It's great to see you all again. You may remember that we are in the middle of class election campaigns. When people run for student council, they often make promises so people will choose them in the voting. Some promises seem too good to be true, and I often think, *I'll believe it when I see it.* We know one promise that is the best promise and definitely true: Jesus promised to die on the cross and rise again, and that's exactly what He did.

We believe that about Jesus even though we have never seen Jesus with our own eyes. Raise your hand if you think believing in something without seeing it is hard. If you have your hand raised, you are in good company. One of Jesus' very own disciples—

Thomas—had a hard time believing Jesus was alive. In today’s lesson Jesus appeared again to His disciples, this time with Thomas the e.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Last week, we learned Jesus appeared to His disciples, and He shared with them that they had a job to do. Those of us who are believers in Jesus also have this same mission. Do any of you remember? *What is our mission as believers? Our mission as believers is to make disciples of all nations by the power of the Spirit.*

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline or big story circle.

LEADER • Last week we learned that Jesus appeared to His disciples, but one of the disciples—Thomas—wasn’t with the others. Even though the women, the Emmaus disciples, and the rest of the disciples had seen Jesus and told Thomas that Jesus is alive, Thomas doubted. To *doubt* something means to be unsure if it is true or trustworthy. Thomas did not believe his friends. Let’s see what happened in our story. It’s called “Jesus and the Doubter.”

• Giant Timeline or
Big Story Circle

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to John 20:24-29. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Jesus and the Doubter.”

LEADER • Have you ever been hanging out with a bunch of your friends, and then you had to leave the room

• Bibles
• “Jesus and the Doubter”
video
• Big Picture Question
Poster
• Bible Story Picture
Poster

for a minute? When you come back, everyone tells you something amazing happened—and you missed it! How do you think that would feel? In some ways, it would be easy to feel sorry for Thomas. I mean, it might not have been his fault that he wasn't there when Jesus appeared. It is sometimes hard to believe what our friends tell us. But Thomas should have believed what Jesus said—before He went to the cross!

Long before Jesus ever died on the cross, He had told His disciples that He would die on the cross to rescue people from sin and He would come back to life on the third day, like the Scriptures promised.

Even though Thomas should have believed based on what Jesus had promised and what the other disciples said, Jesus showed grace to Thomas. Jesus appeared again to His disciples. This time, **Jesus showed His hands and side to Thomas** Thomas believed!

Christ connection

LEADER • After Thomas believed, Jesus said something very important. He said, “Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Those who believe without seeing are blessed.” Which kind of person was Thomas? That's right. Thomas had to see to believe, but Jesus said that believing without seeing is very important. Believing without seeing is called faith. It is a gift from God. It is this type of faith that helps us understand that we are sinners.

Even though we didn't see it with our own eyes, Jesus died for our sins on the cross and rose again

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

on the third day. We have not seen Jesus, but if we believe in Him based on what God’s Word says about Him, we will be blessed with eternal life from God!

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.

- Key Passage Poster
- “On the Third Day” song

LEADER • First Corinthians tells us that Christ died for our sins, He was buried, and He was raised on the third day. This is all according to the Old Testament Scriptures. That news may seem unbelievable because we didn’t see any of it, but God’s Word is completely trustworthy. We can believe what the Bible says because God cannot lie. Let’s review our key passage by singing.

Lead boys and girls in singing “On the Third Day.”

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Can you think of a time a friend or family member told you something that you did not believe? How did you react? Did you turn out to be right or wrong? Think about that as you watch this short video.

- “Unit 27, Session 2” discussion starter video

Show the “Unit 27, Session 2” discussion starter video. Discuss with the kids why the kid in the video had trouble believing. Ask them what they can do if they have trouble believing something God says in His Word.

LEADER • We all struggle with doubt sometimes. Our doubts about God can lead us to do things our way instead of His way, which is sin. When we struggle to believe God, we can tell Him and ask Him for help believing. We can also talk to church leaders

about it. There is no reason to feel ashamed if we are struggling to believe something, but it is important to talk about it with an adult you trust. God's Word is trustworthy and teaches us what we need to know about God.

Sing (4 minutes)

• "The Glory" song

LEADER • Even though all the other disciples told Thomas that Jesus was alive, Thomas refused to believe. Jesus gave Thomas grace. Grace is when we get something we don't deserve. Jesus shows grace to us by taking our punishment for our sin. That is a Savior worth praising. Let's sing to Him now.

Sing together "The Glory."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, thank You that none of Your followers in the Bible is perfect—just like we are not perfect. Thank You that we can learn from Thomas' struggle to believe. Give us hearts to believe in You, even though we don't see You with our eyes yet. Give us boldness to share about You so others can trust in You by faith. In Jesus' name, amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Apply THE STORY

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Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- poster board, 5 sheets
- markers

Before class, divide the key passage into five sections and write each section in large letters on a separate sheet of poster board. Divide the class into five sections. Invite each section of kids to say or shout their portion of the verses at the right time. See how quickly they can do it, then mix up the posters and allow kids the chance to say another portion.

SAY • Some might doubt the truth in our key passage, but we know it is true according to the Scriptures. It was wrong for Thomas to doubt that Jesus was alive based on what Jesus had promised and based on what the Scriptures had promised would happen. We can believe the truth in our key passage because of our faith in God's true Word.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- mini dry erase boards or chalkboards
- chalk or dry erase markers
- wipes (for cleanup)

Pass out mini chalkboards or dry erase boards to the group. Help kids turn in their Bibles to John 20:24-29. Briefly remind kids that John was one of Jesus' disciples, and he witnessed this event first hand. As you ask review questions, encourage them to write their answers on the board. Assist

non-writers as needed.

Sample questions:

1. Who did not believe Jesus is alive? (*Thomas, John 20:24*)
2. How many days had it been since Jesus appeared to the disciples? (*8, John 20:26*)
3. What did Jesus say to His disciples when He appeared? (*Peace to you, John 20:26*)
4. What did Jesus show Thomas? **Jesus showed His hands and side to Thomas**)
5. Did Thomas believe? (*Yes, he said Jesus is his Lord and his God; John 20:28*)
6. What is something about God you sometimes doubt? (*Answers will vary.*)

SAY • Sometimes we are like Thomas and have a hard time believing Jesus. Jesus loved Thomas and showed Him grace by allowing Him to see and feel His wounds. We don't get to see Jesus with our eyes yet, but until He returns, we can trust in Him through faith. Jesus said that those that believe without seeing are blessed.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Red or green

Give each child a red and a green circle. Read the following statements about the Bible. If it is a true statement, the kids hold up the green circle. If they believe it is a false statement, they will hold up the red circle. You may choose to give children a yellow circle as well to express times they are uncertain. Be sure to clarify the correct answer after each statement.

- The Bible has 75 different books in it. (*false, 66*)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.



- red circles
- green circles
- yellow circles (optional)

books)

- The Bible is a book of fairy tales. (*false, the Bible is God's Word; 2 Tim. 3:16*)
 - The Book of John is in the Old Testament. (*false, New Testament*)
 - The Bible has everything we need to know to believe in Jesus. (*true, 2 Pet. 1:3*)
 - The Bible says faith is when we believe only in the things we see. (*false, faith is trusting in the things we do not see; Heb. 11:1*)
 - Believing something without seeing it is hard. (*Answers will vary.*)
- SAY** • You guys did a great job picking true or false for these statements. Sometimes knowing if something is true can be hard. It was hard for Thomas, but **Jesus showed His hands and side to Thomas**. Jesus also reminded us that those who believe without seeing are blessed.

OPTION 2: Silent theater

Form smaller groups of kids and give them time to decide how they will act out the Bible story. They may pantomime actions and use facial expressions, but they may not speak or make a sound. Give each group a chance to act out today's lesson as you quickly retell it.

- SAY** • You did a great job acting out today's lesson. I wonder what it would have been like to be in that room? Would you have been brave enough to reach out and touch Jesus' wounds? Why or why not?

Even though Jesus had promised to rise again and the disciples said they had seen Jesus alive, Thomas refused to believe. Thomas had plenty of evidence to

show that Jesus is alive. We have plenty of evidence too! God's Word tells us that Jesus died on the cross and came back to life. We may not see Jesus with our own eyes, but we can trust that He is alive.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.