

LESSON 40

Doubting Thomas

JOHN 20:19-31



BIBLE TRUTH

JESUS CALLS TO FAITH ALL WHO ARE HIS

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read John 20:19–31 from the Scriptures or read story 118, “Doubting Thomas,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. OBJECT LESSON 1 15 MIN

Will You Believe?

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ opaque container
- ✓ three or four strange objects (e.g., collectibles like a rare coin or sports memorabilia, or odd objects, e.g., wing from a butterfly, the pastor’s toothbrush)

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

Is It Real?

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ two real flowers
- ✓ two fake (silk) flowers (the object is for the children not to be able to tell which flowers are real and which are fake so find the most realistic silk flowers you can)
- ✓ vase

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

7. ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Color a Picture

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page for NT Lesson 40—one for each child
- ✓ markers or crayons

LESSON SNAPSHOT

8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 10 MIN

Place Your Faith in Me

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ two eggs
- ✓ solid plastic cup (not a flimsy disposable cup, but a strong, solid one)
- ✓ water
- ✓ four-foot length of strong cord
- ✓ plastic tarp or trash bags and paper towels to clean up egg/liquid messes

TOTAL 80 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

The disciples believed—Although the risen Jesus had appeared to Mary and to Peter and to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the disciples remained huddled in a room, afraid of what the authorities might do to them. It is likely the soldiers had already begun to spread the rumor that the disciples had stolen Jesus’ body (Matthew 28:13–15). While the disciples were gathered, Jesus entered the room even though the door was locked. Startled and frightened, they thought he was a ghost (Luke 24:37). But Jesus showed them his hands and side, scarred from the wounds he had received upon the cross. Also, Jesus opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). Once they understood that Jesus was real, they were overjoyed. Jesus breathed on the disciples, and they received the Holy Spirit. They were then commissioned to spread the gospel, but as Luke 24:49 records, Jesus told them to remain in the city until they were clothed with the Spirit’s power.

Thomas believed—Thomas, absent during Jesus’ visit with the other disciples, refused to believe them and said he would not believe unless he could touch the wounds of Christ himself. One week later Jesus reappeared and granted Thomas’ request. Instantly Thomas’ doubts faded and he believed, exclaiming, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). These words 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 by saying, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). We are among those who have not seen but are called to believe. Rather than rebuking Thomas, Jesus called him to faith. Jesus knew that apart from the work of grace to open a person’s mind to understand the Scriptures, we are all doubters.

Will we believe?—John 20:30–31 adds a bit of commentary. John writes that he did not record every miracle of Jesus but what he did record 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 hearts. In Romans 1:16 Paul said the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

Where Is the Gospel?

How does today's Bible story fit into 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. Yet, Thomas, who was absent, did not believe. He was in need of gospel truth. Jesus knew what Thomas needed and reappearing in his presence, 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 his sins, Thomas believed. For us, although we have not seen, we have heard the Word and when God opens our minds, we too can believe.

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read John 20:19–31 from the Scriptures or read story 118, “Doubting Thomas,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 15 MIN

Will You Believe?

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ opaque container
- ✓ three or four strange objects (e.g., collectibles like a rare coin or sports memorabilia, or odd objects, e.g., wing from a butterfly, the pastor's toothbrush)

Place the objects in the container and announce to the class that you have the pastor’s toothbrush, a wing from a tiger swallowtail, and a Babe Ruth baseball card in your box. (These items are only examples. The object is to make the grouping so unusual that the class begins to doubt.)

Ask the class what would help them believe you actually have these items. (They should answer that they would like to see them.) You might tease them and say, “No, no, I can’t open the box, you guys will just have to trust me.” That should provoke their curiosity all the more. Finally relent and show them that yes, in fact you do have the items.

Ask the class how seeing the items helped them believe. Explain to them that sometimes we must believe without seeing. That is what today’s lesson is about. Then use today’s Scripture to teach them the following three points:

1. Sin blinds us to the truth. When the other disciples told him they had seen the Lord, Thomas said, “Unless I see the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.” Sinfully, we reject the truth and turn away from God.
2. God seeks us when we are lost. Jesus came to the disciples; Jesus came to Thomas. God takes the initiative. The risen Jesus had already appeared to the disciples. But eight days later they were still locked in the same room—and still afraid (John 20:19, 26).
3. It’s not too late to believe. What about us who have never seen Jesus in person? Jesus says, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). How can we believe if Jesus is gone? The miracles of Jesus are recorded for us so that we might believe (John 20:30–31).

The question is whether you going to believe what you read or reject it.

TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESON 2 10 MIN

Is It Real?

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ two real flowers

- ✓ two fake (silk) flowers (the object is for the children not to be able to tell which flowers are real and which are fake so find the most realistic silk flowers you can)
- ✓ vase

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

Place the flowers all together in a vase and keep them out of sight until time for this object lesson.

Show the children the vase of flowers and ask them to guess whether they are real or fake. (They should struggle to guess.)

Ask them what would help them to know if they were real or not. (They will likely say they need to smell or touch them to know for sure.) 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 and note that even before the disciples asked, Jesus showed his hands and side to them willingly (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 (John 20:25). We can still long to touch the wounds of Christ, for it is by these wounds that we have received forgiveness and life.

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

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.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Color a Picture

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page for NT Lesson 40—one for each child
- ✓ markers or crayons

While the children are coloring, engage them by asking the following questions:

■ **What do the nail prints in Jesus hands remind us of?**

(The nail prints remind us that he died on the cross. It is important to remember his death because it was through his death that Jesus brought us new life.)

■ **Why didn't Thomas believe?**

(Thomas did not believe because he did not see Jesus.)

■ **Once Thomas saw Jesus did he change?**

(Yes, once Thomas saw Jesus he believed.)

CLOSING PRAYER **5 MIN**

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

BONUS OBJECT LESSON **10 MIN**

Place Your Faith in Me

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ two eggs
- ✓ solid plastic cup (not a flimsy disposable cup, but a strong, solid one)
- ✓ water
- ✓ four-foot length of strong cord
- ✓ plastic tarp or trash bags and paper towels to clean up egg/liquid messes

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

Before class drill two holes opposite one another near the cup rim. Make the holes big enough so that you can insert a cord to use 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 try. Stand on the spread out tarp and throw the egg up in the air and clap a large number of claps. Do not catch the egg, but let it fall and break on the tarp. 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. To really make it interesting tell the student that 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 and 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 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, and then ask the class if anyone believes you can do it. If anyone says they believe, test their belief by asking them to lie down on the tarp while you perform your trick.

If you get a volunteer, fill the cup 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.

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 with the cup. Place the student’s head away from your swing. That way if you do hit them, you will only hit their shoes.

Talk to the class about the difference between the two meanings of belief: (1) acknowledging that something is real (like a true fact); or (2) placing your whole faith and confidence in someone.

LESSON 40 - DOUBTING THOMAS

