

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

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 15 MIN

I Told You Before

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ Bibles for the class
- ✓ prizes for the winning team

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

7. ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Jesus and Thomas

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Compare the Words of Christ

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper and pencils
- ✓ Bibles for the class

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.

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 God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!”

Demons acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God, but they don’t 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 in his work on the cross. We truly believe only when we place our trust in him.

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

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

OBJECT LESSON 2 15 MIN

I Told You Before

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ Bibles for the class
- ✓ prizes for the winning team

Divide the class into two teams. Tell them their challenge is to find a verse where Jesus predicted his death or resurrection. Play three rounds, one for each of the following sections of the Gospels: Matthew 16—18; Mark 7—10; and John 2—12. The team that finds the first reference is the winner.

Then, one by one, look up the following references and talk about how each points to Jesus' death or resurrection:

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 understand that Jesus was simply following God's well-thought-out plan to save us from our sin.

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

Jesus and Thomas

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Draw a picture of Jesus speaking to Thomas (John 20:27–29).

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

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

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Compare the Words of Christ

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper and pencils
- ✓ Bibles for the class

Compare Luke 24:45–47 with the following Old Testament passages: Psalm 16:9–11; 22:15–22; and Isaiah 53:9–12.

How can recognizing prophecies about God's plan build our faith? (It is amazing to read 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.)