

**LIFE POINT**

People can believe that Jesus is the Savior.

# THOMAS BELIEVED



## LEADER BIBLE STUDY



**LEVEL OF BIBLICAL LEARNING**

God's salvation is eternal. Nothing can separate Christians from God's love.

**SCRIPTURE REFERENCE**

John 20:19-31

**UNIT VERSE**

"For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."  
John 3:16 (CSB)

**WEEKLY VERSE**

"For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."  
John 3:16 (CSB)

**SUGGESTED FOR THE WEEK OF**

April 12

**CONTEXT AND COMMENTARY FOR PERSONAL STUDY AND PREPARATION**

Merriam-Webster provides three definitions of the word *doubt*: "to call into question the truth of," "to lack confidence in," and "to consider unlikely."

Thomas displayed doubt when the disciples said, "We've seen the Lord!" He called their story into question by pragmatically pointing out the effects of the crucifixion and the mortal wounds in Jesus' hands and side. He considered their claim highly unlikely, beginning his response with an uncertain "if." He lacked confidence in their claims by stating that he needed to see it to believe it. Thomas' doubt was certain. Considering what they all experienced, the resurrection claims were unbelievable. Would we have responded any differently in that situation?

Doubt is a normal part of the human experience. Many people who love Jesus deeply also experience seasons of doubt. Author C.S. Lewis wrestled with doubt after the loss of his wife. Preacher Charles H. Spurgeon confessed moments of doubt and depression. While in a Nazi prison camp, Corrie ten Boom struggled to see the goodness of God. Jesus came for people with doubts. He died for people with uncertainty. He rose again for people needing to overcome fear. Doubt is strong, but God's grace is stronger.

Believers can experience doubt when they encounter difficult circumstances beyond their control. While doubt is not sin, the consequences of sin can produce doubt. Through Christ, believers can have peace despite their circumstances, and they can know the freedom of forgiveness. (Ephesians 2:13-14; Romans 8:1-2)

God knows the frailty of the human heart. He understands doubt. God gives reassurance to the believer. First John 3:19-20 tells us, "This is how we will know that we belong to the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows all things."

Jesus knew what Thomas needed. The next time Jesus visited the disciples, Thomas was present. Jesus invited Thomas to touch His hands and His side. The unbelievable became real. Thomas could only exclaim, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus knows what you need. As you pray this week, be honest with God. Share your doubts. Be specific, like Thomas. Imagine yourself in Jesus' presence. Look at the wounds in His hands and His side. Thank Him that His love never wavers and is bigger than your feelings.

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## PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

- Explain that it is important to know that Jesus is God's Son because He came to show us how much God loves us and to teach us how to live.
- Instruct the preteens to find and read Matthew 16:13-17.
- Point out that Jesus is special because He is both fully God and fully human. He came to earth to help us and to save us.
- Emphasize that when you understand Jesus is God's Son, you can trust Him and follow His teachings.

➤ No advance preparation or supplies needed.



## MISSIONS EMPHASIS

\* Missouri Map      \* Missouri fountains

- Tell preteens: "Luis and Nohemi Sanchez started two Spanish-speaking churches in Missouri."
- \* Practice counting from 1–10 in Spanish, using "Spanish Numbers 1–10."
- Form groups of 2–4 preteens, giving each group a deck of cards.
- Lead preteens to play traditional card games, such as: "Go Fish" or "Crazy Eights," but use the Spanish words for the numbers as they play. For example: "Do you have any cincos?"
- Pray for the Sanchez family as they help and talk to people in their churches. Pray that their churches will continue to grow.

➤ Printables:  
"Unit 2 Missions:  
Midwest: Kansas City"  
"Spanish Numbers 1–10"

➤ deck of cards



## INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

- Instruct preteens to spread out and give themselves some room.
- Explain that in each round, preteens should raise their hands if they think they can do the challenges given to them. If they raise their hands to a challenge, they must then prove that they can do it.
- Be encouraging with each exercise and try to get everyone to participate.
- Call out these challenges: Do ten jumping jacks. Run in place for 5 seconds. Stand on one foot for 15 seconds. Freeze in place for 10 seconds. Touch your nose with your tongue. Wiggle your ears. Whistle.
- Praise the group for doing a great job and mention that, although it was easy to prove some things they could do, Jesus proved to the disciples that He was alive by revealing things to them as well.

➤ No advance preparation or supplies needed.



## STUDY THE BIBLE

- › Pack Items
  - 12: “Unit 2 Banner”
  - 13: “Unit 2 Verse”
- › Teaching Picture 7
- › Music
- › Videos
- › permanent marker
- › 50 plastic cups—Draw a star on the inside bottom of 6 cups and mix them randomly with the others.

### 1. GETTING TO THE POINT

- \* • Display the “Unit 2 Banner” and invite preteens to read it with you.
- Lead preteens to turn to John 3:16 and read the verse together.
- Remind the group that God has great love for them. It is because He loves them so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for their sins so they could be forgiven and have eternal life with Him. By believing in Jesus and trusting Him as their Savior, they can be saved from the consequences of sin and eternal death. Through faith in Him, people can receive God’s gift of forgiveness, love, and the promise of life forever with Him in heaven.
- Explain that there are people who have heard this good news of Jesus’ sacrifice to save them and still do not believe, much like a man named Thomas, whom preteens will learn about today.
- \* • Show the “Scripture Sketches” video.

### 2. LOOK IN THE BOOK

- Select a volunteer to find and read John 20:19-23.
- Explain that the disciples were hiding behind locked doors, afraid after Jesus’ death. It had been three days, and they were in shock. Then Jesus appeared to them. Instead of reprimanding them for their fear, He offered peace and showed them His wounds as proof that He is alive. He reassured them and gave them the Holy Spirit to empower them. The disciples were filled with joy, realizing their Savior is alive.
- Ask the group: “Why do you think Jesus showed His wounds to the disciples? What did that mean for them?”
- Choose a volunteer to find and read John 20:24-25.
- In these verses, Thomas was not present when Jesus first appeared. The other disciples told him that Jesus is alive, but Thomas did not believe. He wanted proof: “If I don’t see the mark of the nails in his hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe.” Thomas showed that doubt is normal when faced with something hard to believe. It is one thing to hear about something, but it is another to experience it for yourself.
- Ask the group: “Have you ever doubted something that seemed too good to be true? How did you figure out if it was true?”
- Ask a final volunteer to find and read John 20:26-31.
- Explain that a week later, Jesus appeared again. This time Thomas was there. Jesus invited Thomas to touch His wounds and believe. Thomas responded, “My Lord and my God!” This is a shift from doubt to belief. Jesus patiently gave Thomas the chance to encounter the truth personally.



- Point out that Jesus' words to Thomas are also for us: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." Jesus teaches that faith does not rely on physical proof but on trusting in what He has done for us.
- Ask: "Why do you think Jesus said, 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe'? How does this apply to us today?"
- Remind the group that Thomas saw Jesus, but they are blessed when they believe without seeing. John wrote his Gospel so people might believe that Jesus is the Messiah and receive eternal life through Him. Belief and trusting in Jesus gives life and transformation.
- Challenge the group: "Do we believe in Jesus as our Savior? Are we willing to trust in Him, even without seeing Him?"
- ~~Lead preteens to sing "Believe."~~

### 3. REVIEW CHALLENGE

- Place 50 plastic cups facedown on a table.
- Explain that preteens will take turns picking up one cup at a time. If they pick a cup with a star, they will answer a review question in the sidebar. If the cup is empty, they are safe and will not answer a question.
- Remove cups from the table after they are chosen.
- Continue the game until preteens answer all the review questions.
- Encourage the group to help answer questions if needed, ensuring everyone participates, and the material is reviewed together.

### 4. UNIT VERSE CHALLENGE



- Read the "Unit 2 Verse" together.
- Explain that in each round, preteens will do a different action while they recite the verse. Lead preteens to do one of these actions each round: Hop on one foot, do jumping jacks, do high knees, do frog jumps, spin in circles.

### 5. APPLY THE BIBLE AND PRAY



- Show "The Adventures of Dab and Derek" video.
- Remind preteens that after Jesus' resurrection, He appeared to His disciples, except for Thomas, who doubted Jesus' resurrection. Thomas only believed when he saw Jesus.
- Explain that, according to Jesus, those who believe without seeing are blessed. People choosing to trust in Jesus as their Savior, even without physical proof, are choosing to exercise their faith.
- Challenge the group this week to think about how they can strengthen their faith in Jesus as the Savior of the world, trusting in Him even without being able to physically see Him.
- Pray, thanking Jesus that we can believe in Him as our Savior.
- Dismiss preteens to Live It Out groups.

### REVIEW QUESTIONS

- › How did the disciples feel when they saw Jesus? (*They were overjoyed and amazed.*)
- › What did Jesus say to the disciples when He appeared to them? (*He said, "Peace be with you."*)
- › What did Jesus show Thomas to prove it was Him? (*He showed him His hands and side.*)
- › What was Thomas' reaction to the evidence? (*He declared, "My Lord and my God!"*)
- › Why is it important to believe in Jesus without seeing Him? (*It shows faith and trust in God's Word.*)
- › How can we trust God more when we have doubts? (*Answers will vary.*)



## LIVE IT OUT

### CHOICE 1

- › No advance preparation or supplies needed.

### CHOICE 1

#### PLAY “THE DETECTIVE DETERMINES”

- Form a circle with preteens. Choose a preteen to be the detective for the round. Ask the detective to stand outside the door, so he cannot see or hear the group.
- Once the detective is out of sight, select one preteen to be the movement leader. The movement leader will choose a simple movement (such as clapping, spinning, or jumping), and the rest of the group will copy the move. Make sure it is not so obvious who the leader is.
- Call the detective back in to stand in the middle of the circle. Make sure the group is already doing something before the detective returns. The group will continue moving, with the movement leader changing the moves whenever she thinks the detective is not looking.
- Emphasize that the detective’s goal is to guess who the movement leader is. If the detective thinks she knows, she can make a guess. If she guesses correctly, the round ends. If not, the movement leader continues changing the moves.
- Help the detective until a correct guess is made, or the detective gives up. Choose a new detective and leader, and start a new round.
- Remind the group that Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection. At first, they were uncertain and afraid, just as the detective was unsure about who the movement leader was. However, Jesus showed Thomas His wounds, giving him proof. Jesus’ words to Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe,” serve as a reminder that faith in Jesus as the Savior is not always based on physical evidence, but on faith in Him.

### CHOICE 2

- › Kids Activity Pages: “The Doubts of Thomas”
- › pencils

### CHOICE 2

#### SOLVE THE PUZZLE

- Encourage preteens to look at “The Doubts of Thomas” on their Kids Activity Pages.
- Connect the letters to the empty coordinating color boxes to reveal the missing letters.
- State that once everyone has completed the puzzle, they have solved the message. (*“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”*)
- Discuss with the group how the message relates to John 20:19-31, where Jesus revealed Himself to His disciples and Thomas after His resurrection. It took faith for the disciples to recognize Jesus as the Savior. When Thomas saw Jesus’ wounds, he believed.
- Explain that just as the puzzle required preteens to use color clues to reveal a hidden message, they knew it was going to reveal a secret message. Thomas needed evidence of Jesus’ resurrection to fully believe He was the Savior. He needed tangible proof before he could



## LIVE IT OUT

believe. Jesus responded, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (John 20:29). This reminds us that belief in Jesus as the Savior is not always about seeing, but about trusting in His truth, just like the message we uncovered in this puzzle.

### CHOICE 3

#### PLAY A GUESSING GAME

- Instruct the group that for each round, a “Shoebox Items” card will be placed in the shoebox.
- Before each round, invite two preteens to play and each stand in front of a shoebox. One will be the “answerer” and the other the “questioner.”
- Explain that the answerer will look inside his shoebox to see what is on the card. He cannot show anyone what is on the card in the box. The questioner will ask questions such as: “What color is the item?”
- State that the questioner can ask up to 10 questions.
- Note if the item is correctly guessed, the player wins the point. If not, the answerer receives the point.
- Reset the box and select two new players to play the game.
- Remind preteens that after Jesus’ resurrection, Thomas doubted Jesus was alive. He needed proof to believe. Jesus allowed Thomas to see His wounds and told him: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” This shows that faith is not always about seeing the truth directly but trusting in what we cannot immediately prove.

### WRAP UP

- Remind preteens that Jesus appearing to His disciples, including Thomas, reveals that Jesus was dead, but now He is alive! Thomas would not be convinced of Jesus’ resurrection until he had proof. Sometimes people need proof in order to believe, but Jesus said blessed are those who believe and have not seen.
- Encourage the group to remember that it is easy to doubt sometimes, but we should always remind ourselves that Jesus has helped people overcome fear and doubt, and we can always trust Him.
- Remind preteens to take home their One Conversation pages and review them with their families.

### CHOICE 3

- › Pack Item 16: “Shoebox Items”
- › 1 shoebox
- › Enlist leaders to quickly reset the box each round.