



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Community Group Material:

Bible Reading: John 20:24-31

But Thomas (called 'Twin'), one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples were telling him, 'We've seen the Lord!' But he said to them, '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.' ²⁶ A week later his disciples were indoors again, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Don't be faithless, but believe.' [or "*Don't be unfaithful, be faithful!*"] ²⁸ Thomas responded to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen & yet believe.' ³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may believe that

Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (20:24-31 CSB)

SUMMARY:

Thomas gets a bad rap. Unfairly dubbed 'doubting Thomas,' he's a victim of caricature and mistranslation. The term 'doubt' never appears in this episode.

As a devoted disciple, Thomas was poised to be an eyewitness of Jesus' resurrection. For unknown reasons, he missed Jesus' Easter Sunday appearance, where his followers were commissioned. Confronted by his peers regarding Jesus' resurrection, Thomas rejected their testimony, seeking his own firsthand experience. He wasn't unique; all the disciples struggled during the transition from Jesus' earthly ministry to the era of the risen Christ and the Spirit.

Jesus, mercifully granting second chances, appeared to Thomas, meeting his conditions and affirming his role as an eyewitness. Jesus' charge, "Don't be unfaithful; but be faithful," prompted Thomas's declaration, "My Lord & My God," the climax of John's Gospel.

This narrative isn't about doubts, but about faithfulness. Thomas was faithful in his era; let's emulate that in ours. Our moments of disconnect from God don't disqualify us from grace. Jesus deals patiently with our shortcomings, restoring us to fulfill our God-assigned roles in his plan. Let's heed His call to remain faithful.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you understand by the phrase "Doubting Thomas"? Have you heard this phrase before? Where?
2. The disciple Thomas is widely known as "Doubting Thomas." Based on this episode (20:24-29) do you see any basis for this moniker? If so, where does the text suggest that Thomas is a "doubter"?
3. Thomas was absent from Jesus' Easter Sunday visit to the assembled disciples (20:24). Does Jesus (or the text) blame or criticize Thomas for his absence? If Jesus doesn't blame Thomas, should we? (Discuss)
4. When his fellow-disciples tell Thomas about Jesus' appearance, he rejects their testimony (20:25). Does Jesus blame or criticize Thomas for this? If Thomas had accepted/believed the disciples' report is he restored to where he would've been without missing Jesus' Easter Sunday visit? Why or why not?
5. Later Jesus appeared & told Thomas, 'Put your finger here & look at my hands. Reach out your hand & put it into my side...' (20:27). What conclusions/lessons can/should be drawn from this? Discuss.
6. Jesus charge to Thomas (20:27b) can be rendered as [a.] "Don't be faithless, but believe.' or [b.] "*Don't be unfaithful, be faithful!*", or [c.] "Don't be an unbeliever, but a believer, or. [d.] "Stop doubting, and believe." Which of these 4 options best characterizes the situation described in this episode? Discuss.
7. Was Thomas' faith less (or of lower quality) than the faith of Mary Magdalene & the other apostles/disciples? Does Thomas demand to see, touch, etc. imply he has less faith than others? Discuss.
8. Jesus tells Thomas: 'Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen & yet believe.' (20:29). What conclusions/implications can we draw for this? Discuss.