

John (So That You Might Believe) (Week 10/12) So that you might believe (Easter)

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect: *Who could you invite this Easter to hear about Jesus—the promised King who is worthy of our devotion, our praise, and our belief?*

Warm-Up

1. Whilst we are focusing on Thomas' encounter with the resurrected Jesus, what are the other encounters in chapter 20? What transformations do we see in each of the eyewitnesses?

Read John 20:24-26

2. What does Jesus first say to Thomas? Was this more than just a greeting? Why or why not?
3. What is the ultimate peace that we can have? How has Jesus made this possible?
4. Why is it surprising that Jesus' first words are of peace and not rebuke, fault-finding, or blame?
5. In what way—when we go to Jesus—can we be assured of also receiving a peace that lasts?
6. How has forgiveness from God brought about a peace that lasts for you? What reminds you of this?

Read John 20:27-31

7. Why is Thomas often called 'doubting Thomas'? Do you think this is fair?
8. For how long have the disciples been telling Thomas that Jesus has been raised? In a similar way to the disciples repeatedly sharing the news, how are our lives to point to the resurrection on repeat?
9. What were Thomas' objection to belief? What types of objections do people have today?
10. What evidence has Thomas already had that could have given him confidence? What might have been some of the reasons for his objection? Do you sympathise with any of these?
11. In what way does Jesus both invite Thomas to examine the evidence but also rebuke him?
12. Why (for the future of proclamation) was it important for Thomas to see Jesus raised? How have we benefited from Thomas' (and the other disciple's) eyewitness testimony?
13. Does Jesus expect we would believe without any evidence? What does Jesus say about those who believe but who have not seen? Who does this apply to?
14. What convinced you that the resurrection of Jesus was real and also relevant?
15. What is the 'life' that we can know when we believe in Jesus? How does it have a present and future dimension? How is it made possible through Jesus' resurrection?
16. What was the ultimate purpose that John wrote his Gospel? Who—on your frontlines—do you long for to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing to have life in his name?

Apply *What gives you confidence about the resurrection? What is one way the resurrection and the certain hope to resurrection transforms your day-to-day life?*

Pray *Gracious God, thank you that Jesus died for us and rose again, bringing life, forgiveness, and life forever to all who believe. Help us to believe, live as your people, and proclaim his resurrection until his return. Amen*

GOING DEEPER

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Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Front Line this Week

Do you know what your frontlines are? Think about the places and people you spend time with - in your family, in your neighbourhood, at work, at the school pick-up, or as a friend.




For Families

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen:* John Stott on John 20:19-31:
https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=50950&show_file=59557
- *Listen:* “Peace through the Resurrection” by William Taylor:
<https://www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/57310/>
- *Listen:* “Belief through the Resurrection” by William Taylor”
<https://www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/57314/>
- *Listen:* “Encountering the Risen Jesus” by Tim Keller:
<https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/encountering-the-risen-king-9185/>

Series Resources

- *Read:* “John: An Expository Commentary” by R C Sproul.
- *Read:* “The Gospel According to John” by Don Carson.
- *Read:* “The Message of John” by Bruce Milne. 
- *Read:* “The Gospel According to John” by Leon Morris.
- *Read:* “John for Everyone: Part 1” by Tom Wright. 
- *Read:* “Can We Trust the Gospels?” by Peter Williams. 
- *Read:* “Signs of the Messiah: An Introduction to John’s Gospel” by Andreas Köstenberger
- *Watch:* “John” by the Bible Project: <https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-john/>
- *Previous Series* from St Bart’s (including Children’s Resources):
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/jesus-is>
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/i-am>
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/truth-glory>

 Available to borrow from the St Bart’s Library (Toowoomba): stbarts.com.au/library

For sermons and additional resources, visit stbarts.com.au

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JOHN (SO THAT YOU MIGHT BELIEVE)

Easter Day: "So that you might believe"

by the Rev'd Adam Lowe (05/04/2026 7:30am, 9:30am, 6pm)

믿게 하려 함이라 | Eë bāk yä gäm | 为叫你们相信 | இதினால் நீங்கள் விசுவாசிக்கும்படி

Bible Passage: John 20:1-10; 24-31

Heart of Sermon: *The resurrection is the ultimate sign of Jesus calling us to move from unbelief to belief, and receive the life Jesus brings.*

Gracious Father, thank you that Jesus has risen from the dead! Please help us to believe in him and proclaim his resurrection until the day he returns. In Jesus' Name, Amen

The entire goal of the Gospel of John, *this early account of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection*, is that we would believe that Jesus is God's King — *the Messiah* — and God's Son.

- John isn't shy about that. He's not trying to secretly manipulate us. There's no hidden agenda. He plainly tells us that that is his goal.
- We heard it read: right at the end of chapter 20:
- That the signs that Jesus performed are recorded in this book..so that: *you may believe, and that by believing you may have life in his name. // That's it.*
- John records all of these signs, there's a long list of them, like *Jesus turning water into wine, healing the official's Son, healing a paralysed man, miraculously feeding 5000+ people, making a man blind see, walking on water, even raising Lazarus from the dead* — *not to wow us but so that we would respond in belief.*
- But the greatest sign — Jesus' death and resurrection — well, the best was saved to last. Jesus was *physically* raised from the dead. /
- Maybe that sounds a bit unbelievable to you? A bit far-fetched?
- If you do, then you're in good company, because the tailend of John's Gospel, is packed full of people who are very *very* surprised to encounter the resurrected Jesus.
- For all sorts of reasons no one expected that Jesus would be raised from the dead. But as they encounter the resurrected Jesus, it not only results in a remarkable shift from *unbelief to belief*, but a transformation of each of them *by their belief in Jesus.*

Mary goes to the tomb in great sorrow to anoint the body and mourn her Lord's death. Yet the moment she hears Jesus say her name, she believes, and her sorrow gives way to joy.

The disciples are locked up in a room in fear.

Yet when the Lord appears, they believe, and their fear gives way to peace.

But Thomas — Thomas is not so sure.

- Perhaps we can all identify with Thomas a bit! /
He's the sensible guy — right? Dead people aren't raised to life.
He's the most famous doubter of all time!
- He wasn't there at the tomb when Mary encountered Jesus.
He wasn't there in the room when the disciples encountered Jesus.
- *He's disconnected from what's happened. /
If someone has brought you along today, maybe you feel a bit disconnected from these claims.*
Thomas might think they've all gone mad. Maybe you think that, too!
- He's sceptical. And understandably so.
- *I think Thomas serves as a great little case study of belief. There's a bit of Thomas in all of us. /
But, if we take a closer look, we also see three things that ARE TRUE FOR US.*
- So let's have a look. We see:
Objection to Jesus; Invitation from Jesus, and Life in Jesus' Name.

OBJECTION TO JESUS | VERSES 24-25

예수님의 대한 의심 | Jiēxi dē Yēcu | 对耶稣的抗拒 | இயேசுவுக்கு மறுப்பு

First, we see **objection to Jesus**. Verse 24...

24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "**Unless** I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

We don't *really* know why Thomas was absent when Jesus first appeared to the disciples, *why he he missing from the room WHERE IT HAPPENED*, but having not been there, it's easy to appreciate why he *doubted* and even *dismissed* that Jesus had risen from the dead.

- It's been a week since Jesus appeared to the disciples. /
The more time that passes the more his doubt likely grows.
And when John says that the disciples told Thomas *that they had seen the Lord* (in verse 25), that doesn't mean they just mentioned it once, *but that they haven't stopped telling him.*
- It's on repeat. They're telling him over-and-over again. Of course they are!
That's the natural response you'd expect. It should be the song of our heart, too! /
Thomas, we've seen the Lord! Thomas, we've seen the Lord! Thomas, we've seen the Lord!
Agh! Okay, I get it! But I haven't. /
- He doesn't seem distressed that he's missed out, he seems skeptical if it happened at all. /

- Thomas had witnessed so many miraculous signs performed *by Jesus*.
- Thomas had shared the meal with the multitude, watched a blind man gain his sight, he'd likely even conversed with Lazarus after he'd been raised from the dead.
- But Jesus *being* raised from the dead? Are you kidding me? Did you see the sort of death that he endured?
- Even the eyewitness accounts of his *closest* friends are not enough.
- He's adamant:
Unless I see the nail marks in his hands.
Unless I put my finger in his wounds.
Unless I stick my hand in his side. I WILL NOT BELIEVE. /
- In gruesome detail Thomas is not only giving voice to his objections, but he's specifying his conditions for belief.
- Unless. Unless. Unless.
- Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever had a list like that *for God*? A set of conditions for belief?

If you had a list — imagine a big sheet hanging up here — *what would be at the top?*

- Perhaps Thomas' objection is **experiential**.
If he didn't experience for himself then he won't believe it. I wasn't there, so I won't believe it.

Maybe that's your objection? / The problem is that we reasonably believe all sorts of things that we haven't personally experienced, but others have, all the time.

What percentage of things in history do you believe that you've never seen for yourself?

Your not seeing it doesn't mean that it isn't true.

- Perhaps Thomas' objection was **intellectual**. *I won't believe because I don't think it's possible. A type of scientific objection—I can't repeat this in an experiment, therefore it can't be real. The problem with that is that because scientific evidence relies on something repeatable, it doesn't help us if something was a one-off — if it only happened once.*
- Perhaps Thomas' objection was **emotional**. That just entertaining the possibility that his Lord was alive was too much to bear. He was in the thick of grief. *He was only just beginning the process of coming to term with the death of his Lord. Maybe he didn't dare get his hopes up.*
- Or maybe it was all of the above. /
 Whatever the case, he was clouded by doubt and his heart was hesitant.

How about you?

- Maybe it's a mix of the above. / Maybe you haven't really thought about it. Sometimes, if we're honest, what really blocks us is that we don't want it to be true. /
- I really appreciate that another, Thomas — Thomas Naghel, *the American Philosopher and atheist, (1900 years after our Thomas in John)*, summed up his objection honestly like this.

I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that."

- He went onto say that he had a hunch, he had a conviction that actually:
that the common belief that there is nothing but the material world, is often not based on evidence — like the evidence we can weigh up in the Scriptures, but on a personal condition of simply run my life my own way.
- That there is no room for God. /
- We can come up with all sorts of objections to belief.
We can come up with all sorts of conditions for belief.
- *Unless I see this... or only if you God does that...*
- But if our hearts aren't even open to the possibility, what potential is there to respond if true?
- *Sometimes our conviction to not believe rules out the possibility of recognising what's true.*
- Countless people witnessed the signs of Jesus. But not everyone believed.
Some objected to his claims. Some wanted to see him killed. Others didn't care.
- For many, it wasn't the absence of evidence, but a closed heart.

INVITATION FROM JESUS | VERSES 26-28

예수님의 초대 | Cōt bō'nōŋ Yēcu | 耶穌的邀請 | இயேசுவின் அழைப்பு

Second, *we see* **invitation from Jesus**. Look how Jesus greets objection. / Verse 26.

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. 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; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Whilst 'peace by with you' was a common greeting of the day, there's absolutely nothing ordinary about Jesus using these words here!

- Right into the thick of Thomas' *doubt* and *disillusionment*, Jesus shows up!
He just kind of calmly appears in their locked room, saying, "Peace be with you".
- He's not just saying, G'day, hey, or I'm back!
This isn't simply because Thomas got a startle seeing a dead person alive.
BUT Jesus is declaring something spectacular.
- That because he died for us and *physically* rose again:
That we can know a comprehensive peace because of what he has done for us.
The quality of that peace is restored relationship with God. Peace of a pardoned sinner.
The means of that peace is through Jesus' death and resurrection.

- *He's the only one qualified to give it. He's the prince of peace. It's the peace he alone had promised.*
- And as a new age has dawned in the resurrection, that peace is being made known and available at all.
- *Despite* Thomas' failure to understand Jesus' teaching that he would be raised. *Despite* Thomas' fear and hiding away. *Despite* his apparent unwillingness to believe Mary and the other disciples, Jesus' first words are not blame, nor fault-finding, but PEACE.
- People often say, well if Jesus showed up, then I would believe. But here's the thing: Jesus has showed up. And still today, he comes, right into the thick of our fearful, unsure, and uncertain lives, and he speaks peace that lasts.
- That sin is defeated, that death does not have the final word, and that he is present.

But that's not all that Jesus says to Thomas.

- Jesus has a twofold invitation to Thomas: STOP doubting and START believing.
- **When Jesus says stop doubting**, that doesn't mean that we can't have any doubts, or that we meant to park our brain at the door and suspend any critical thought.
- Of course we can weigh up the evidence. We SHOULD weigh up the evidence. / Jesus doesn't only still bear the wounds, he invites Thomas to examine them. Jesus isn't a ghost. This isn't a vision. Jesus has physically and bodily raised from the dead.

- *Thomas. Put your finger here. See my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side.*
- Thomas must have thought - woah, he must have been listening to me! //

If you're not sure what you think about Jesus, *you ought to examine and evaluate the claim, too.*

- If true — Jesus' resurrection changes everything. / *To stop doubting sometimes just means recognising that our objections might not be as informed as we think or say. Sometimes, if we're honest we've come to all sorts of conclusions about Christianity without really looking at Jesus.*
- We don't have Jesus standing physically in our midst. But we can believe on the basis of the reliability of eyewitness accounts. That's what we have written down for us in the New Testament. In fact, throughout the early church, even recorded in Acts, we see that the veracity of the claims about Jesus were weighed up, based on the eyewitness accounts. The Apostles had a special role in that. But others encountered the risen Lord Jesus, in groups, even 500 at one time.
- I'd love to challenge you, that if you you've never read through the Gospels, or that you've never read through them in a concentrated amount of time. Like a week? Would you? *Try reading Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — ask God to help you see Jesus clearly.*
- Ask is this the one? Is Jesus the one? That's the evidence we're invited to respond to.
- There will always be a point of stepping out of faith. There comes a point when we need to set aside our conditions and embrace Jesus.

- That we might give ourselves unconditionally, to the one who has unconditionally loved us.

And that's what Thomas does.

- Did you notice? He doesn't even touch the wounds! Tim Keller puts it like this:

When Thomas sees the wounds it's like he suddenly says... How can I come to grips with someone who has given himself utterly to me without me giving myself utterly to him. I have to give myself completely to him.

- He simply responds: *My Lord and My God!* (That's what Thomas should be remembered for.)
- It's probably the clearest declaration of who Jesus is in all of the Gospels. These are probably the greatest words that anyone can utter.
- This isn't just a cold affirmation of a doctrine, that Jesus is Lord and God, but this is personal: MY Lord and MY God.
- That's what we're invited to believe. / That's who we're invited to embrace.

LIFE IN JESUS' NAME | VERSES 29-31

예수님 이름 안에 있는 생명 | Piir nē rin kē Yēcu | 在耶穌名里的生命 | இயேசுவின் நாமத்தினால் ஜீவன்

Then Jesus told him, [verse 29] “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

It is extraordinary that as we're invited to believe, Jesus says: not only is it possible and reasonable without seeing him, but blessed, *that is highly favoured are those, who do!* That's us, Or it could be you. When you do, you can have **life in his name**. Back to where we started. *Verse 30...*

30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

- John puts his purpose statement of recording all of these signs, not at the beginning, but immediately after the encounters with the resurrected Jesus.
- That's the ultimate sign that calls for a response. It's why Paul could later write:

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

- Because Jesus is God's grave-conquering King and Son we can know life:
- **Through him.** *The one who is:*
the author of life. He was there at the beginning.
the sustainer of life. In him everything is held together.
the redeemer of life. He conquered death and freed us from its tyranny.
the first fruit of new creation. His resurrection drags ours in its tail.
- **We can know life to the full.** More than just existing.
He brings meaning, purpose, and his presence today.
Our future glory takes hold of our present, as we enjoy a restored relationship with him right now.
- **We can know life that lasts forever that will never tarnish nor fade.**

There was plenty of criticism at the most recent summer and winter olympics, about the quality and durability of the medals. Especially at the Paris Olympics, the medals flaked, starting to corrode, and lost their lustre in some cases within days of being awarded. By human standards, it doesn't get much greater than an olympic win — but the dodgy medals were a humble reminder that even olympic gold doesn't last forever.

- But the promise of God is that we can.
- In a restored relationship with him.
In a renewed creation which he will bring
His resurrection is a glimpse of what awaits those who believe in him.
- That's what Jesus' resurrection guarantees. Do you believe this?