

9. Thomas Believes (John 20:24-31)

“Hosanna! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Mark 11:9)



PLAN

Session Outline

1. Gather

Greeting
Puzzlers
How do You Decide?
Transition to Explore

2. Explore

Sacred Conversations
Hear and See the Bible Story
Interact with the Bible Story
Say the Bible Verse
Transition to Respond

3. Respond

Belief Statement
Do You Believe?
Loving God,
Loving Neighbor
Transition to Bless

4. Bless

Inviting
Praising
Blessing
At Home with God

Supplies

Basic Supplies: Offering basket | Pencils | Paper | Markerboard and dry erase markers or large paper and markers

Gather: TV/DVD player

Explore: TV/DVD player

Respond: Tablecloth | LED candle | Empty bowl

Bless: Tablecloth | LED candle | Empty bowl | TV/DVD player

Before You Teach

Our Bible story is the familiar story of the disciple Thomas (often called doubting Thomas), and his disbelief of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Thomas had not been with the Eleven when Jesus first appeared to them after his death. When they told Thomas, "We've seen the Lord!" (verse 25), he did not believe them. Thomas said he had to see the marks left by the nails (from the Crucifixion) and actually touch the wounds on Jesus' body to believe Jesus had been raised. Eight days later, the disciples, including Thomas, were gathered in a house. The doors were locked, yet somehow Jesus entered and stood among them. Jesus said, "Peace be with you" (the same thing that he said to the other disciples when he appeared to them). Jesus invited Thomas to touch his wounds and believe. After this, Thomas immediately recognized Jesus, saying, "My Lord and my God!" (verse 28). Jesus responded with, "Happy are those who don't see and yet believe" (verse 29). The Scripture ends with a reminder that Jesus did many other miraculous things that weren't recorded. These specific things were written down so that we "will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son" (verse 30).

The point of this story, like the Gospels in general, is to encourage us all to believe that Jesus lived, died, and was raised from the dead. Given that the Resurrection was so hard to believe for Jesus' own disciples, even so close to the time that the Resurrection occurred, it is no surprise that it can also sometimes be hard for children (and adults) today to believe. You will want your children to know that doubt and questions about their faith are OK and that doubt is a natural part of the faith journey of most people. You'll want them to understand that there are things about God and what God does that remain a mystery to us. You'll also want them to continue to work on the skill of finding ways to renew their faith through thinking about and discussing what they believe and decision-making processes surrounding belief. This week, we'll explore what we believe and our doubts.

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GATHER

Greeting

Before class: Display either attendance chart (Class Kit—pp. 16–17 or 15 & 18) at eye level.

- Play “Part of the Story” (Adventure DVD), as you welcome each child.
- Show the children where to place their offerings on the worship table.
- Have the children mark the “Attendance Chart” by signing their first names on week #9.

SAY: Today, we are learning a story about one of Jesus’ disciples named Thomas.

A—Puzzlers (Activity Sheets)

Before class: Tear out the Session 9 Activity Sheets for each child.

- Give each child a copy of “Thomas’s Other Name” (Activity Sheets—p. 19). Let them complete the puzzle.
- Allow them to work on the “Jesus’ Words” activity (Activity Sheets—p. 20).

SAY: Our Bible story is about a time when Thomas doubted Jesus.

OR

B—How do You Decide? (Discussion)

Before class: Gather a markerboard and dry erase markers or a large sheet of paper and markers. Think about how you decide what to believe so that you can contribute to the discussion.

SAY: In our Bible story, a man named Thomas has trouble believing that Jesus has been raised from the dead.

ASK: What do you do when you are deciding whether to believe something or not? What process do you go through? What resources do you consult? What questions do you ask?

- Allow the children to contribute answers to the questions. Add information about your own process for deciding what to believe as appropriate. Write these answers on the board.

TIP: *Be prepared to steer the conversation back on course if the children get off track.*

Transition to Explore

- Encourage children to bring a chair or to sit on the floor in a carpeted area.
- Invite children to form a circle on the floor.

TIP: *Transitions are a helpful way for children to move easily from one activity to the next.*

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EXPLORE

Sacred Conversations

- Encourage children to join and sit in the circle.
- Demonstrate a listening position for the children.
- Ask wondering questions.

ASK: I wonder:

- What things do you have to see to believe?
 - What things do you have to actually touch with your hands to believe?
-

Hear and See the Bible Story

- Read the Bible story together (*CEB Deep Blue Kids Bible*—John 20:24-31).
- Watch the Adventure DVD Session 9.

SAY: Our Bible story for today takes place after Easter when people are talking about the things that happened to Jesus at Easter.

ASK: How can you share the story of Easter?

Interact with the Bible Story

- Assign parts and act out “Thomas Believes” (Bible Story Sheets—Session 9).
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Say the Bible Verse

Before class: Display the “Unit 2 Bible Verse” poster (Class Kit—pp. 7 & 26).

- Tell the children the Bible verse: “Hosanna! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Mark 11:9).
 - Invite the children to say the verse with you.
 - Then, ask the children to imagine how they would say the verse if Jesus suddenly appeared. Have them say the verse again with the enthusiasm of having unexpectedly seen Jesus.
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Transition to Respond

- Encourage children to put away their chairs and/or get back to their places.

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RESPOND

Belief Statement (Writing)

Before class: Gather paper and a pencil for each child.

SAY: In our Bible story, Thomas struggles with what to believe about Jesus.

ASK: What do you believe?

- Have the children write their own belief statement. This can include beliefs about their faith, but it can also be beliefs about values they hold or other things they hold to be true.
- Allow time for any children who would like to share their statements to do so.

TIP: *Be prepared to step in and mediate, if children who share state any beliefs that bring about a negative response in other children.*

OR

Do You Believe? (Activity/Discussion)

Before class: Photocopy “Do You Believe?” (Leader Guide—p. 60) for each child. Gather a pencil for each child. You may decide to give away the answers or to just let the children speculate. Do additional research on the “Do You Believe?” statements if you would like (short answers below).

- Give each child a copy of “Do You Believe?” (Leader Guide—p. 60) and a pencil.

SAY: Let’s take a moment to decide whether we believe the things on this list. Then we’ll discuss them.

- Allow time for them to decide on their answers and then discuss the statements one by one.
- Answers: 1. You can’t; a rainbow is an optical illusion. 2. True. 3. Low, shallow clouds are made of air and water. 4. High, thin clouds are made of small ice particles. 5. Because of the limited number of genes that influence facial features, it is likely. 6. True. 7. Though tomatoes are typically eaten as a vegetable, they are also considered a fruit because they have seeds. 8. Louis Braille invented the Braille system of reading for the blind at age 15.

Loving God, Loving Neighbor

Before class: Put out the Deep Blue Town Map (Class Kit—p.14) and the Benjie, Cinnamon, and baby elephant figures, and the Zoo building (Class Kit—p. 19).

SAY: In our Bible story, Thomas had trouble believing what he could not see and touch.

- Allow the children to come up with a scenario about belief using the figures and act it out.

Transition to Bless

- Ring a bell to announce the transition.
- Create a worship center on a small table with a tablecloth, an empty bowl, and an LED candle.

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BLESS

Inviting

Before class: Display “Unit 2 Bible Verse Signs” poster (Class Kit—p. 30) on a wall or bulletin board.

SAY: Let’s learn to sign our Bible verse.

- Gather the children around the Bible Verse Signs poster. Have the children read the Bible verse.
 - Teach the children to sign the verse, and have them practice signing the verse to one another.
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Praising

Before class: Gather a TV/DVD player and the Adventure DVD.

SAY: Today, we’re learning about part of Jesus’ story

ASK: Did you know that, like Jesus, we are all part of God’s story?

SAY: Let’s learn a song about being part of God’s story!

- Play “Part of the Story” on the Adventure DVD, and let the children sing along.
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Blessing

Before class: White paper cut into quarters and a pencil for each child.

SAY: In our Bible story, Thomas, one of Jesus’ twelve closest disciples, experienced doubt. We all experience doubt sometimes during our faith journey. Let’s each take a moment to write down something that we feel doubt about or something we question about our faith.

- Give each child a slip of paper and a pencil. Assure them that they will not have to read what they’ve written down aloud to the class. When they are done writing, instruct them to fold their paper so that the writing cannot be seen.
- Gather around the worship center, and light the candle. Call the children one at a time to approach the worship table. Have each child place his or her slip of paper in the bowl without reading it. Then pray the following prayer for the child.

PRAY: Dear God, we pray that you will send your Holy Spirit to comfort and reassure (insert child’s name) during moments of doubt in (his or her) life. Assure (insert child’s name) that you are with (him or her) always. Amen.

ASK: (Optional) How does it feel to turn a question over to God?

At Home with God

SAY: What was one thing that you learned today about Thomas’s doubt? Can you share what you learned with your family?

- Send Bible Story Sheets—Session 9 and the Unit 2 Song Sheet home with each child.

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Do You Believe?

1. Do you believe that you can find the end of a rainbow? YES NO

2. Do you believe that a redwood tree (world's tallest) often lives 500–700 years? YES NO

3. Do you believe that some clouds are made of dry air and water? YES NO

4. Do you believe that some clouds are made of ice? YES NO

5. Do you believe that every person has a twin in the world? YES NO

6. Do you believe that humans blink more than 15–20 times per minute? YES NO

7. Do you believe that a tomato is both a vegetable and a fruit? YES NO

8. Do you believe that a fifteen-year-old invented the Braille reading for the blind? YES NO