

When Love comes to Town

Close Encounters With Jesus

HomeGroups@West

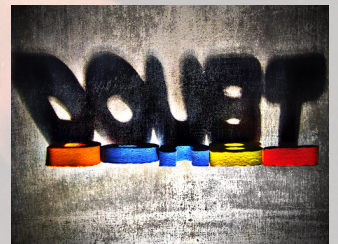
'I don't believe it!!'

Session 10

Read John 20:24-30

You cannot believe in God and Jesus by depending on someone else's belief.

That kind of belief--believing because your parent, grandparent or friend believes--is okay for a transition period, but you can't go on like that forever. In order to resolve doubt, you need to decide that you will have the experience of God yourself.



1. Is it good and important to be real about your questions?
2. How do we create a safe space to explore questions about our faith?

Thomas asked questions.

Would God agree with the statement: The only dumb questions are the ones that aren't asked?

Questions that concern your doubts do have answers. But when they aren't asked, you won't find those answers. Thomas verbalized his doubts. One of the problems with the Church is that when we are hurting--and doubt is one of the greatest hurts, many of us play pretend. We keep quiet about our hurt, never getting our needs met.

3. If you've had big struggles of doubts in your faith life (be assured you're normal if you have!), what have you found helpful?



Thomas put courage above his faith struggles: In the first half of Jesus' ministry, religious people had attempted to kill Jesus at least twice (Luke 4 and John 10). Then Jesus

got word that His good friend Lazarus was sick, along with the request to go heal him. The only problem was Lazarus lived within sight of Jerusalem, and Jesus had already told His friends that Jerusalem meant death. While guys like Peter tried to say they would never allow that to happen to Jesus, Thomas simply said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

4. How can courage and determination of faith still exist with doubts?

Thomas put honesty above his faith struggles: Thomas wasn't there when the other guys on the team saw the resurrected Jesus. Yet when he heard them talk about this insane idea that Jesus was physically alive, he stood his ground: "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." John 20:29 is part of Jesus' response but yet it is hard not to admire Thomas' honesty. We've all met people who lie about their faith just to go along with the crowd and end up with neither honesty nor faith.

5. How important is it to be honest about our doubts?

Thomas put relationship above his faith struggles: Thomas didn't separate himself from his friends because of their differences. And to their credit, the other guys didn't kick him out. The standard church model runs like this: you have to believe in order to belong. The Gospel model says, you can belong before you believe.

6. How important is this type of approach to church life?

Thomas experienced a dramatic resolution to his questions: the resurrected Jesus appearing, disappearing, cooking, eating, floating away. But one offer Jesus made only to Thomas: "Reach out your hand and put it into my side." That's right, "stick your hand into a spear-sized hole in my ribs, all while I'm living, standing and talking to you." Thomas' doubt didn't offend the Lord. It's true, Jesus said "stop doubting," but only after pushing all the chips to the center of the table. In a way, his doubt opened the door to a unique experience with Jesus. Jesus is secure enough in His identity to display grace and patience with people who don't have it all worked out—which, it turns out, is everyone.

Pray for each other as you work through your doubts. If you have confidence, take time to share & pray specifically. Pray for people who have many objections to faith, to encounter Jesus like Thomas did. Pray for those people who are gifted in answering doubts and pray that you would be active in becoming better equipped yourself to patiently listen and to journey with doubters.

