



SESSION **2** OF 4

Jesus and Thomas



MEETING AIM

To explore what it means for us to trust in Jesus, even when we cannot see him.



BIBLE PASSAGE

John 20:19-31



BACKGROUND

We love to use this story as a finger-pointing, 'look, a disciple got it wrong' moment. But instead, perhaps we should use this story to help us remember that faith isn't always easy. For our youngest children, who may be beginning to question things for themselves and are asking whether the stories they hear match up with their own experiences and discoveries of truth, this session provides a safe space where doubts can be articulated and questions asked as we ask Jesus to reveal himself to us as a group.

CIRCLE TIME



As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle and give out your refreshments. Encourage the children to share their stories and news from the week and celebrate special events that have taken place, such as birthdays. Ask the children to think of a time when something or someone has surprised them, and to share these stories.

INTRO ACTIVITY



You will need: a postcard; scissors

Gather the children together and ask them if they believe you can walk through a postcard. The chances are they won't believe you can, so tell them that you are going to show them how it can be done. If you have never seen this trick before, you can find full instructions for cutting the postcard in the right way at youthandchildrens.work/links.

Once you have completed your trick, say that sometimes things seem very unlikely and have to be seen to be believed! Today's story is about somebody who found it hard to accept the truth until he saw the evidence for himself.

BIBLE STORY



You will need: a storyteller to play the part of Thomas who can learn the script and tell the story as though sharing his own recollections – it may help to dress your volunteer in a simple 'Bible character costume'

Gather the children to sit in front of Thomas, who should begin the story as follows:

Hello, I'm one of Jesus' friends. You might have heard of me. My name is Thomas, although sometimes I get called Doubting Thomas. I wonder if you know what that means. I get called Doubting Thomas because I doubted that Jesus really had come back to life. I found it really hard to believe! Well, you would too, wouldn't you?

You see, we'd all been there when Jesus was taken away to die. It was so very sad and not what we'd expected to happen at all. In the few days afterwards, we tried to lie low, me and the other disciples. We weren't sure if the Romans were going to come after us, so we thought it best to hide away. Then some of the others said they'd seen Jesus! Actually seen him, large as life and walking around again.

I think it's pretty fair to say I found this hard to believe. How could he be alive again? It just wasn't possible!

I said I wouldn't believe it unless I saw him with my own eyes, right in front of me. If I could see the scars in his hands and side, then I'd know it was actually him and not just the others hoping for the best.

Well, you'll never imagine what happened. He came! Jesus, I mean. He came to see me and the others too while we were hiding away safely. He came right up to me and showed me the scars in his hands and side. I knew it was him then. Jesus, the Son of God had come back to life again. Jesus is alive!

Jesus challenged me. He said it was easy for me to believe he was alive because I'd seen him with my own eyes. He said it would be far better for the people who hadn't seen him but still believed, because they would be really blessed.

CHATTING TOGETHER



Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What is your favourite part of this story?
- Can you understand why Thomas found it hard to believe?
- What would you ask Jesus if you saw him?
- What helps you believe in Jesus?

CREATIVE RESPONSE



You will need: scratch art boards; tools

Scratch art boards are readily available in plain A5 cards or ready-cut shapes from a variety of craft stores, including Baker Ross. Explain to the children that Jesus revealed himself to Thomas by appearing directly in front of them. How does he reveal himself to us?

Invite the children to use the scratch art to reveal a picture, symbol or question in response to the story today. They may choose to write a question they would like to ask Jesus or draw something that helps them put their trust in him in their day-to-day lives, or a scene from the story. Use the coloured background to reveal the picture as a reminder of the way Jesus revealed himself to Thomas.

PRAYER



Gather the children together and invite them to participate in the actions as you lead the group in prayer:

Dear Jesus, even though we cannot see you with our eyes, help us to see that you are right here with us. *Hold your hands up to your eyes, as though forming a pair of glasses or binoculars.*

Even though we cannot feel you with our hands, help us to feel you close to us today. *Hold your hands out in front of you.* Even when it's hard, help us to trust that you are right here with us. *Stamp your feet.* Amen.

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