

Doubting Thomas

Lesson At-a-Glance

Scripture Reference
John 20:19-31

Lesson Focus
Jesus' disciples have moments of doubt and moments of faith.

Bible Memory Verse
"Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'" John 20:21

Gather (10 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Arrival Activity Kids will tell about something amazing they have seen.	Spark Activity Pages, Spark Coloring Pages	Whiteboard, marker, colored pencils
Circle Time Kids will share a story about a time they were afraid.	Spark Song CD, Spark Songbook	Music source, soft ball
Opening Prayer Kids will hide in a corner of the room and whisper a prayer.	None	None

Open the Bible (15 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Doubting Thomas Story Kids will be invited to ask hard questions about the story.	Spark Story Bibles, Spark NRSV Bible	Whiteboard, markers
Questions for Jesus Kids will write questions they would ask Jesus.	Leaflets	Markers

Activate Faith (15 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Peace Pictures Kids will create an image of peace.	Leaflets, Spark Bible Stickers	Markers, yarn, glue, glitter, feathers, cotton balls
People of Peace Kids will play a quiet game.	None	None

Send (5 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Closing Conversation Kids will discuss ways to show others about Jesus.	Leaflets	None
Closing Prayer Kids will make prayer requests.	Spark Family Pages	Paper, pencils

Bible Background

Jesus' disciples feared for their lives after his crucifixion and hid together in a locked room. Nevertheless, without needing to open the door, Jesus appears among them! He shows them the wounds in his hands and side, breathes God's Spirit on them, and sends them out into the world to share the good news of the resurrection and of God's love. Thomas, however, had missed the initial encounter with Jesus and felt he, too, needed to see the wounds in Jesus' hands and side in order to believe. Jesus comes a second time when Thomas is present and helps him believe. Jesus brings peace to all people, even those with doubts and questions.

Why This Story Matters

Kids experience moments of doubt and moments of faith. This story shows that it is possible to be a believer and to still sometimes have doubts. None of the disciples believed without seeing—the others simply saw Jesus *before* Thomas did. It is okay to ask questions. Jesus does not shut Thomas out or send him away. Jesus comes back for Thomas, to show him the reality of the resurrection. It is important for kids to know that questions and doubts are normal. Jesus can turn our doubt into faith.

Gather (10 minutes)

Arrival Activity

If some kids arrive earlier than others and you need a lesson-based activity, make copies of the Activity Page and Coloring Page and set them out for kids to try.

As kids arrive, invite them to take turns sharing stories of amazing things they have seen. Ask questions encouraging kids to think about how they felt as they experienced these amazing things. Make notes of their amazing stories on a whiteboard.

Spark Resources

Spark Activity Pages
Spark Coloring Pages

Supplies

Whiteboard
Marker
Colored pencils

Circle Time

Today we're going to talk about what happened in the days after Jesus rose from the dead. At that time, the disciples were hiding in a house with the doors locked. They were afraid of being arrested because they were friends of Jesus.

Stand in a circle and toss a soft ball around. Whenever a person catches the ball, they will share their name and a brief story about a time they were afraid.

Jesus' death was sad and scary for his closest friends, the disciples. Let's see what happens when Jesus encounters his frightened disciples.

Spark Resources

Spark Song CD
Spark Songbook

Supplies

Music source
Soft ball

MUSIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Song 1: "Jesus Loves Me" (tracks 14 and 31 on Spark Song CD, page 76 in Spark Songbook)

Song 2: "I Believe, I Do Believe" This upbeat John Ylvisaker song might make some little ones tongue-tied. Have fun singing this song of faith!

Opening Prayer

Pretend to hide in a corner of the room, just as the disciples hid after Jesus' death. Whisper this prayer, with kids echoing each line.

**Jesus,
Sometimes we are afraid.
Sometimes we don't believe.
Thank you for showing up
And bringing peace.
Amen.**

Spark Resources
None

Supplies
None

Open the Bible (15 minutes)

Doubting Thomas Story

Invite kids with Spark NRSV Bibles to each find and sit with a buddy with a Spark Story Bible.

As a large group, quickly make a list of a bunch of things you believe in—things you know to be true. (*God is good, families and friends are important, food and water keep us alive, etc.*)

In today's Bible story, Jesus appears to the disciples after being raised from the dead. This was incredible news. How would you act if someone you thought was dead came back to life? Accept answers and invite kids to show their feelings on their faces. **But one of Jesus' friends, Thomas, wasn't in the room when Jesus came. He didn't believe the story the disciples told him. Would you?**

Ask kids to close their eyes and try to picture the scene as you read John 20:19-31 aloud from the Spark NRSV Bible. When you've finished reading, invite kids draw on the whiteboard what their faces would have looked like if they were in the room where Jesus appeared. **Our faces can communicate how we're feeling. Was your face happy, surprised, excited, scared, confused, or something else?** Invite kids to describe the pictures they drew.

Next, have buddies show each other where the story is in their own Bibles. When looking at the Spark Story Bible, buddies can identify which of the disciples' faces looks most like the face they made a moment ago. Older kids can show their younger

Spark Resources
Spark NRSV Bibles
Spark Story Bibles

Supplies
Whiteboard
Marker

buddies where the story is in the Spark NRSV Bible. Once they complete the Bible Memory Verse, they can put an "I Memorized It" sticker near John 20:21.

Bible Memory Verse

"Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'" John 20:21

Encourage buddies to come up with movements to go along with a few of the words, to help them remember. Examples: Make a cross with your hands for "Jesus." Make a peace sign for "peace." Point to yourself for "me," and point to your buddy for "you."

Questions for Jesus

As a group, come up with a few questions you might ask Jesus, then ask the buddies to choose their favorites or come up with their own. You may need to offer suggestions; for example: Why can't I ever see you? Why did you have to die? How did you come back to life? How can you be with everyone in the world at the same time? Why do kids get cancer sometimes? Why did my dog have to die? Are there pets in heaven? How old are you?

When kids have finished creating and documenting their questions, invite buddy pairs to share their questions with the rest of the group. If any other groups have duplicate questions, invite them to raise their hands. When they've finished sharing, read and discuss the Bible Bits together.

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Supplies

Markers

Activate Faith (15 minutes)

Peace Pictures

Jesus told the disciples he brings peace. What does peace mean? Take a few minutes to explore the idea of peace. What does it look like? What comes to mind when someone says "peace"? Of all the things Jesus could have said when he appeared, why would he say, "Peace be with you"? Also, you may need to explain that "peace" and "piece" sound the same but mean two different things. **Talk with your buddy about what you imagine in your mind when you hear the word "peace." Use the craft supplies to make a peace picture on the leaflet. When you've finished, describe your peace picture to your buddy.**

Ask for volunteers to read the Did You Know? items aloud. Invite kids to place a sticker or special mark next to the item they found the most interesting.

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Spark Bible Stickers

Supplies

Markers

Yarn

Glue

Glitter

Feathers

Cotton balls

People of Peace

This is a game of quiet and peace. Ask all the kids to stand on one side of the room. A leader stands in the middle of the room. **When I make the peace sign** (index finger and middle finger raised in a “V”), **you all will make your way silently across the room. Anyone who makes noise will join me in the middle of the room. They will help catch people making noise. Make sure you don’t make any noise with your mouth, feet, hands, or any part of your body.** Continue playing until you have only one person left who has not made any noise, or until you run out of time. The last person is the Peace Person of the day.

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

None

Send (5 minutes)

Closing Conversation

Jesus helps us believe in him, even though we can’t see him. What helps you know Jesus? Answers may include the Bible, worship, Sunday school, family members, church workers, or friends. **The disciples hung around together in the days after Jesus died. They told stories, ate meals together, and encouraged each other. Who are some people you can be around to do similar things with this week?**

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Supplies

None

Read through the suggestions in Faith on the Go! Ask each kid to tell you what they are going to try this week.

Closing Prayer

Distribute Spark Family Pages . In addition to the suggestions on the Family Page, encourage kids to make peace placemats or a peace tablecloth with their family. Next, ask kids to share with you what or who they would like to pray for. Write their petitions down and offer a closing prayer that incorporates them.

Spark Resources

Spark Family Pages

Supplies

None

Jesus, we know you love us when we believe and when we doubt. Hear the prayers we have today. (Offer the prayer petitions of the kids.) **Bring us peace every day. Amen.**

As you say goodbye to kids, make sure they take home the leaflet and Family Page.