

Bible Hero

Thomas
The Apostle

Teachers
Story notes



Essential Teachers notes:

To call Thomas the doubter is only half of the story, rather Thomas is a man of declaration. This story is not one encounter but a look at Thomas from the perspective given by the statements he makes throughout the Gospel of John. Doubt is both a normal and, at times, a healthy reaction. Doubt is a form of questioning and leads both adult and child alike, into a journey of discovering the truth. As leaders we can easily mishandle doubt and make it a huge negative in young minds, often painting doubt as the opposite of faith. While there is some truth in that approach it is important to note that Jesus does not dismiss Thomas because of his doubts but helps him to find a way through them.

Main Passage : John 20

Additional Passages : John 11 + 14

Today's story is about one of Jesus' 12 special friends called disciples. This Disciple is called Thomas.

Thomas didn't always understand Jesus, most of his disciples had trouble understanding Jesus, but Thomas knew that Jesus was special, he was different, and he was worth following. Thomas travelled with Jesus for a long time and learnt to trust him.

The first time the bible tells us about Thomas speaking is quite amazing. The disciples and Jesus were called to visit a sick friend but the other disciples were scared to go. The last time they had been near the friend's house the people had wanted to kill Jesus by throwing stones at him. While the other disciples were scared Thomas trusted Jesus. Thomas said 'Let's go with Jesus, that we may die with him.'

The other disciples must have thought Thomas was crazy. Nobody wants to die. But, Thomas was so confident in Jesus he wouldn't leave him.

Thomas wanted to follow Jesus everywhere. When Jesus said he would be going to his father's house to prepare a place for his friends Thomas was confused. He didn't want Jesus to leave him and he didn't know the way to find where he had gone. Jesus explained to Thomas and calmed his fears. Jesus was the way to the father's house, he was the way to truth and life. Thomas didn't really understand what Jesus meant, but he trusted Jesus.

But then everything went wrong for Thomas. Jesus was arrested. This time Thomas was so scared he ran away, everyone ran away and left Jesus alone to face a trial. Thomas wanted to stay with Jesus but he really was scared of dying, it had been easier to say the words when Jesus was with him than it was now.

Thomas hid as Jesus was sentenced to death and he hid as Jesus died on the cross. After Jesus' body had been put in the tomb Thomas and the other disciples gathered in an upstairs room with the door locked. Everyone was scared. What would happen if the religious leaders started to punish the followers of Jesus too?

Then on the third morning the women who were supposed to be cleaning Jesus' body came rushing into the room to tell everyone that Jesus wasn't dead, that he was alive. Thomas was really confused now. He wanted to believe the women but were they so upset by Jesus' death that they were making up stories?

Thomas spent many hours thinking. On Monday evening he returned to the upstairs room to find everybody excited and celebrating. They had seen Jesus too, Jesus really was alive!

What should Thomas do, should he believe them? Thomas was so confused and full of doubt. Thomas decided that he needed proof. Thomas wanted to put his fingers in the holes the nails had made when Jesus was put on the cross.

A week later Thomas met Jesus. The disciples were in their room with the door locked and Jesus appeared. Jesus invited Thomas to come touch his hands, to stop doubting and believe. As Thomas touched Jesus his doubt and confusion cleared away. He understood how Jesus was the way to truth and life. Then Thomas said something amazing. He called Jesus Lord, and he also called Jesus God.

Every week people around the world declare their faith in Jesus, just like Thomas did, by calling Jesus Lord and God! Unlike Thomas we don't get to see Jesus in person, but we believe the words written in the bible about him.

Today's hero is Thomas because he shows us the gift of a Declaration