

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

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



PLAN

Supplies

Deep Blue Resources: Large Group
Small Group Kit: CD-ROM | Leader Guide |
Adventure DVD

Additional Deep Blue Resources:

CEB Deep Blue Kids Bible | Deep Blue
Bible Storybook | Deep Blue Kids Bible
Dictionary

Basic Supplies: CD player | DVD
player | Television or projector and
screen | Offering basket | Crayons |
Pencils | Scissors | Paper | Markers |
Tape | Posterboard | Colored pencils

Gather: Bell

Explore: Balloon

Respond: Small bowl of water

Before You Teach

In John's Gospel account, Mary Magdalene is the first person to see Jesus after his resurrection. Jesus then appears to the disciples in a locked room. Although John doesn't mention that Thomas wasn't present with the other disciples, his absence becomes apparent in the retelling of Jesus' next appearance. Since Thomas has not yet seen the risen Lord, the other disciples are telling him about their experience. Thomas, who witnessed Jesus' arrest and death on the cross, isn't sure he can believe what the other disciples say. Thomas wants to see Jesus for himself.

Because of his stated desire to see the nail marks in Jesus' hands before he believes that Jesus is alive, Thomas has earned the nickname "Doubting Thomas." That nickname does a disservice to Thomas because it implies that Thomas's faith wasn't as strong as it should have been or as strong as the faith of the other disciples. How quickly it is forgotten that the other disciples weren't willing to take Mary Magdalene's word as proof that Jesus was alive. The other disciples wanted to see the empty tomb for themselves and wanted to see Jesus for themselves. In wanting to see Jesus for himself, Thomas was no different than the other disciples.

When Jesus does appear to Thomas, he offered to let Thomas touch the wounds in his hands and side and told Thomas to believe. Jesus was not admonishing Thomas, but instead giving Thomas what he needed to be able to have faith. Jesus met Thomas where he was and gave him what he needed in order to believe. Thomas immediately recognized Jesus, without needing to touch him, and proclaimed that Jesus is Lord. Thomas shows us it is OK to have a questioning faith. Jesus will meet us where we are and provide us with what we need so that we may believe.

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GATHER

Note

The following activities are planned to introduce today's theme. Depending on your setting, you may set up the gathering activities as centers and let the children choose, OR you may select one or more of the activities for all the children to participate in. You may also choose to use one or more of the activities during the Small Group Time at the end of the lesson.

Greeting

- Play the theme song, "All Are Welcome" (CD-ROM), as you welcome each child.
- Show the children where to place their offerings.

SAY: Today our Bible story is about Jesus and his disciple, Thomas.

Believe It/Doubt It (Movement Activity)

Before class: On one posterboard, write the words, "I believe it!" On another posterboard, write the words, "I doubt it!" Display the two posterboards on opposite sides of the room.

- Show the children the two posterboards.

SAY: I am going to read you some statements about people and things in the Bible. However, not all of the statements are true. If you think the statement is true, stand by the sign that says, "I believe it!" If you think the statement is false, stand by the sign that says, "I doubt it!"

- Read the statements from "Believe It / Doubt It" (Leader Guide—p. 95). When you reveal the correct choice, have the children who have chosen incorrectly pay a "price," such as five jumping jacks, eight sit-ups, and so forth.
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Things We Can't See (Science Activity)

Before class: Cut paper into 1-by-8½ strips.

- Invite each child to choose two paper strips. Have each child lay the two strips of paper in front of her or him, one above the other, with the long edges at the top and bottom.
- Slide the top piece of paper approximately one inch to the left and use a small piece of tape to secure the two pieces at the short edge of the top strip. Have each child turn his or her pieces of paper over and use a small piece of tape to secure the two pieces on the other side.
- Invite each child to hold the paper strips by the center of one of the strips of paper and toss it upwards into the air. The paper strips should open up and spin as the paper floats to the ground.

ASK: What is separating the two strips of paper and making them spin? (*wind, air currents*) Why do the paper strips eventually fall to the ground instead of floating up to the ceiling? (*gravity*)

SAY: We cannot see air or gravity, but we know they exist because we see their effects.

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GATHER

Is It Really You? (Writing Activity)

- Give each child a piece of paper.

SAY: I am going to read you the beginning of a story that you will need to finish.

- Read the children the following story:

The strangest thing happened to me the other day. I went to my friend's house, as I've done many times before. I was especially excited about seeing my friend that particular day because we hadn't seen each other for two weeks while I'd been on vacation.

When I reached the house, my friend opened the door and peered out. "*(blank for child's name)*, is that you?" my friend asked.

"Of course, it's me!" I said. "Who else would it be?"

"I don't know," my friend said, "but you look different. How do I know it's really you?"

SAY: Think about how you would prove to your friend that it is really you.

- Encourage each child to write an ending to the story.
- Invite the children to share their stories with each other.

OR

Message for Thomas (Logical Activity)

Before class: Photocopy "Message for Thomas" (Leader Guide—p. 96) for each child.

- Give each child a copy of "Message for Thomas" and a pencil.
- Encourage each child to complete the puzzle. (*Answer: No more disbelief. Believe.*)

Transition to Explore—Sacred Conversations

- Ring a bell to indicate to the children that it is Large Group Time, and have the children move to the large group area.

ASK: What is one thing you believe?

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EXPLORE

See the Bible Story

- Watch the Deep Blue Adventure for Session 9 (Adventure DVD) with the children.

ASK: Do you need to see something to believe it?

Hear the Bible Story

SAY: Today's story is from the Gospel of John.

- Read the story, "Thomas Believes," from the *Deep Blue Bible Storybook*—pp. 435–437.
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Interact with the Bible Story

Before class: Photocopy "Thomas Believes" (Leader Guide—p. 94) for each child.

SAY: Last week we heard a story of Jesus appearing to two of his disciples after his resurrection. Many of Jesus' followers saw him after he had risen from the dead. Today's Bible story is about one of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances.

- Read the Bible story from "Thomas Believes."

ASK: Why do you think Thomas wasn't sure whether to believe the other disciples? (*He had seen Jesus suffer and die. It was hard to believe he could be alive after that.*)

SAY: Jesus understood it was hard for Thomas to believe. He appeared to Thomas so Thomas could believe like the other disciples did. The story of Thomas reminds us it is OK to ask questions about our faith. We can ask questions and still believe.

Review the Bible Verse

ASK: Does anyone remember the Bible verse we've been learning this month?

- Encourage the children to work together to remember the verse.
- Show the Bible verse (Graphic 6a—CD-ROM).
- Encourage the children to read the verse together with you.
- Show the children the signs for the Bible verse from American Sign Language (Graphic 6b—CD-ROM).

TIP: Look on the *Deep Blue Kids* website under the *Free Stuff* tab to see a video with the signs demonstrated.

- Invite the children to sign and say the Bible verse with you several times.

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EXPLORE

Praising Time

- Play the song, “Part of the Story” (CD-ROM). Let the children dance as the music plays.

SAY: Thomas wanted to see Jesus before he would believe Jesus was alive. Jesus understood that, but Jesus also knew that people in the future—people like us—would not be able to see him. That’s why Jesus said, “Happy are those who don’t see and yet believe.” When we believe in Jesus even though we can’t see him, we call that faith.

- Show the children a balloon.

ASK: What will happen if I blow into this balloon? (*It will get bigger.*)

- Inflate the balloon and hold it closed with your fingers.

ASK: What is inside of the balloon that is making it larger than it was? (*air*) Can you see the air inside of the balloon? (*No.*) How do you know that the balloon is filled with air? (*because it is larger than it was*)

- Let go of the balloon.

SAY: We could not see the air, but we saw the balloon get bigger. And when I let go, we saw the escaping air propel the balloon around the room. Some of you may have felt the air as it escaped. Although we can’t see air, we can see and feel the effect of air. Faith is like that too. Even though we can’t see Jesus, we can see people sharing God’s love and helping each other. Those actions help us believe in Jesus.

PRAY: God, thank you for stories that help us believe in Jesus. Help us to live following Jesus’ example so others may also believe. Thank you for loving us each and every day. Amen.

Loving God, Loving Neighbor

Before class: Print the “Meet Our Neighbors” poster and the Deep Blue Shores Map (CD-ROM). Display the poster and map where the children will be able to see them.

SAY: This year we are meeting some of the members of the community where the Deep Blue Kids live.

- Show the children the poster and tell the children about Benjie, Edgar’s dad, and Cinnamon.

ASK: Do you have pets at home?

- Allow the children an opportunity to share about their pets.

Transition to Respond

SAY: Stand up and follow my directions. Touch your head. Touch your shoulders. Clap your hands. Touch your knees. Touch your toes.

- Dismiss the children to their small groups.

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RESPOND

Younger Elementary Small Group

Reflect and Connect

SAY: Let's review the story of Jesus and Thomas.

- Encourage the children to work together to retell the story.

ASK: What helped Thomas believe that Jesus was alive?

SAY: Jesus was not upset with Thomas for wanting to see him before Thomas believed Jesus was alive. Jesus understood the other disciples had seen him, and Thomas wanted to see him too.

ASK: When have you seen people sharing God's love with someone else? When has someone shared God's love with you? When have you shared God's love?

- Invite the children to share their experiences.

SAY: Even though we can't see Jesus, we can see people following his teachings and sharing God's love, and those things help us believe Jesus is alive. When we believe in something we can't see, that's called faith.

- Give each child a piece of paper.

SAY: Imagine you can see faith. Think about what it might look like. There are no right or wrong answers. You are using your imaginations.

- Invite each child to draw a picture of what faith might look like.
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Blessing

Before class: Fill a small bowl with water.

- Have the children sit in a circle.

SAY: Each week during our Small Group Time, you will receive a blessing. Blessings help remind us we are important and loved by God. Today when I give you a blessing, I will use water to draw a cross on your forehead or on the back of your hand. When it is your turn to receive a blessing, hold up your hand if you want the water on your hand or hold your hands in your lap if you want the water on your forehead.

- Bless each child by dipping your finger in the bowl of water and then drawing a cross on the child's forehead or hand.

SAY: (*Child's name*), always believe that God loves you.

At Home with God

SAY: When you go home today, tell your family about Jesus and Thomas.

- Send a copy of "Thomas Believes" home with each child.

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RESPOND

Older Elementary Small Group

Reflect and Connect

SAY: Jesus was not upset with Thomas for wanting to see him before Thomas believed Jesus was alive. Jesus understood the other disciples had seen him, and Thomas wanted to see him too. Although most of us have not seen Jesus, we see many other things.

ASK: What have you seen that helps you believe Jesus is alive? How can your actions help other people believe in Jesus? What are some things you can do to help other people believe in Jesus?

- Invite the children to share their thoughts.
- Give each child a piece of paper. Have each child use a colored pencil to draw a circle in the middle of the paper and write the statement, "I believe in Jesus," inside the circle.

SAY: Think about the statement, "I believe in Jesus." Notice what other words or thoughts come to your mind. Draw a line out from the center circle and write the new word or thought. Draw as many lines out from the circle as you wish. You might want to use a different color for each word or thought. Then look at the new words you have written and go through the same process, using lines to connect related ideas and thoughts. There are no right or wrong answers. These are your thoughts.

- Allow the children time to reflect and write.

SAY: The story of Thomas reminds us that it is OK to ask questions about our faith. We can ask questions and still believe.

Blessing

Before class: Fill a small bowl with water.

- Have the children sit in a circle.

SAY: Each week during our Small Group Time, you will receive a blessing. Blessings help remind us we are important and loved by God. Today when I give you a blessing, I will use water to draw a cross on your forehead or on the back of your hand. When it is your turn to receive a blessing, hold up your hand if you want the water on your hand or hold your hands in your lap if you want the water on your forehead.

- Bless each child by dipping your finger in the bowl of water and then drawing a cross on the child's forehead or hand.

SAY: (*Child's name*), always believe that God loves you.

At Home with God

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Bible Story



After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples. One of the disciples named Thomas wasn't with the other disciples when they saw Jesus.

The disciples told Thomas, "We have seen the Lord!" Thomas wasn't sure whether to believe them. After all, Thomas had seen Jesus die.

Thomas said, "Unless I see Jesus and touch him, I won't believe."

Eight days later, the disciples, including Thomas, were together in a locked room.

Jesus appeared among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then Jesus said to Thomas, "Here I am. Come and touch me. Believe!"

Thomas knew it was Jesus and he said, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said, "You have seen me and you believe. In the future many will not be able to see me, but they will still believe. Happy are those who don't see and yet believe."

These things are written about in the Bible so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son.

(Based on John 20:24-31.)

At Home with God

DO THIS WITH YOUR FAMILY AT HOME: TALK ABOUT BELIEFS

Talk with your family about what you believe. Remember that it is OK to ask questions. Work together to write down some family beliefs. Display the beliefs somewhere in your house.

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Believe It / Doubt It

Psalm 117 is only two verses long. (Believe it!)

It didn't rain in the garden of Eden. (Believe it! Genesis 2:5)

Noah had three sons named Joel, Aaron, and Samson.
(Doubt it! Genesis 6:10)

There is a story in the Bible about a talking donkey.
(Believe it! Numbers 22:28-30)

King Solomon once ordered a baby to be cut in half.
(Believe it! 1 Kings 3:16-25)

Three wise men visited Mary and Joseph while Jesus was in the manger. (Doubt it! Matthew 2:1-12)

Noah only took two of every kind of animal on the ark.
(Doubt it! Genesis 7:2-3)

The apostle Paul was in three shipwrecks.
(Believe it! 2 Corinthians 11:25)

All four Gospels tell about Jesus' birth.
(Doubt it! Mark and John don't mention it.)

Jesus had brothers. (Believe it! Matthew 12:46)

Jesus is alive! (Believe it! John 20)

Jesus once appeared to the disciples while they were together in a locked room. (Believe it! John 20:26)























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Message for Thomas

After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to the other disciples, but Thomas wasn't with them. When the disciples told Thomas they had seen Jesus, Thomas didn't believe them. Jesus later appeared to all the disciples, and Jesus had a special message for Thomas.

Solve the puzzle to find out what Jesus said to Thomas. Start with the box containing the number 1. Write the first letter of the object in that box in the first blank of the answer. Then do the same for numbers 2, 3, 4, and so on.

 12	 21	 18	 11	 9
 2	 5	 22	 3	 10
 15	 4	 1	 19	 16
 14	 8	 6	 13	 20
 17	 7			

1 2 3 4 5 11 7 19 9 16 14 12 8 20 15
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10 17 18 19 22 21 6
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