

Small Group Guide: Encounters - Meeting Jesus in Our Doubt

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question: Share about a time when you had to wait for something important. How did the waiting affect you emotionally?

Sermon Overview (5 minutes)

This sermon focuses on Thomas's encounter with the risen Jesus and explores how doubt exists even among believers. The key message is that Jesus meets us in our doubt and wants to move us from doubt to declaration—from questioning to vocal faith.

Key Takeaways

1. **Doubt exists even among believers** - It's normal and human to experience doubt
 2. **Jesus doesn't let doubt linger** - He pursues us like the shepherd pursuing the one lost sheep
 3. **You are not forgotten** - Jesus meets us exactly where we are
 4. **Jesus gives us what we need** - He met Thomas's specific need for proof
 5. **Doubt should turn into declaration** - Thomas went from "I won't believe" to "My Lord and my God!"
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Discussion Questions

Section 1: Understanding Thomas (15 minutes)

1. **Why do you think Thomas reacted so differently than the other disciples?** What might he have been feeling during those seven days?
2. **The pastor suggested Thomas might have felt forgotten or less loved.** Have you ever felt that God showed up for others but not for you? How did you handle that?
3. **Do you think Thomas's demand was a sign of weak faith or strong faith?** Explain your answer.

Section 2: Our Own Doubts (20 minutes)

4. **The sermon states: "Doubt exists even among believers."** Why do you think Christians sometimes feel they can't be honest about their doubts?
5. **Read Mark 9:24 - "I believe; help my unbelief!"** How can this prayer be a model for us when we're struggling with doubt?
6. **The pastor mentioned that doubt can "steal our joy" or affect others around us.** Have you seen this happen? How can we process doubt in healthy ways?
7. **What's the difference between honest questioning and doubt that lingers too long?** How do we know when our doubt has become unhealthy?

Section 3: Jesus Meets Us (15 minutes)

8. **Jesus offered Thomas exactly what he needed - to touch His wounds.** What does this tell us about how Jesus deals with our individual needs?
9. **The sermon says, "We don't need to touch Him to trust Him."** What does trusting without seeing look like in practical, everyday life?
10. **How can we recognize when Jesus is meeting us in our doubt?** What are some ways He shows up that we might miss?

Section 4: From Doubt to Declaration (15 minutes)

11. **Thomas's doubt turned into the declaration: "My Lord and my God!"** What would it look like for your current struggles to turn into declarations of faith?
12. **The pastor challenges us to "get vocal" about our faith.** What holds you back from being more vocal about what you believe?
13. **He shared a brief encounter at a gas station where faith came up naturally.** What are some everyday opportunities we have to declare our faith?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge (Choose 1-2)

Option 1: Honest Prayer Journal

- Spend 10 minutes each day writing an honest prayer to God about where you're struggling with doubt
- Include the phrase "I believe; help my unbelief"
- Write down one truth from Scripture that counters your doubt

Option 2: Declaration Practice

- Write out your own "My Lord and my God" declaration
- What has Jesus done in your life that you can declare with confidence?
- Share this declaration with at least one person this week

Option 3: Scripture Standing

- Identify one area where you're relying on feelings/experiences instead of Scripture
- Find 3 Bible verses that speak truth to that situation
- Memorize at least one of them
- When doubt creeps in, speak these truths out loud

Option 4: Reach Out

- Think of someone you know who might be a "Thomas" - struggling with doubt or feeling forgotten
- Reach out to them this week with encouragement
- Don't try to fix them; just listen and remind them they're not alone

Reflection Questions for Personal Quiet Time

- Where am I currently experiencing doubt in my walk with God?
- What would I need from Jesus to strengthen my faith right now?
- Am I being honest with God about my struggles, or am I trying to appear more spiritual than I feel?
- What truth from Scripture do I need to stand on instead of relying solely on my experiences?
- How can my current struggle become a future testimony?

Scripture for Further Study

- **John 20:24-29** - Thomas encounters Jesus
- **Mark 9:14-29** - "I believe; help my unbelief"
- **Luke 15:1-7** - The parable of the lost sheep
- **Hebrews 11:1** - "Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see"
- **Psalms 23** - The Lord is my shepherd
- **Matthew 28:20** - "I am with you always, to the end of the age"

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Invite group members to share one area where they need Jesus to meet them in their doubt. Pray together, asking God to:

- Help us be honest about our doubts
 - Meet each person in their specific need
 - Move us from doubt to declaration
 - Give us courage to be vocal about our faith
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Leader Notes

- **Create a safe space:** Emphasize that doubt is normal and this is a judgment-free zone
- **Share first:** Leaders should be willing to share their own doubts to model vulnerability
- **Don't rush:** Some of these questions touch deep places; allow silence and processing time
- **Follow up:** Check in with anyone who shared something particularly vulnerable
- **Celebrate honesty:** Thank people for being real about their struggles