

Big Idea: Honest questions can lead to a deeper faith.

Primary Scripture: John 20:24-29

Supporting Scripture: Psalm 13:1-2; James 1:5; Mark 9:24

CAPTURE (Why should students pay attention to and care about your message?)

- You know that moment in class when the teacher finishes explaining something, looks around the room, and says, “Does everyone get it?”
 - The whole class nods but you don’t get it. Not even a little bit.
 - Everyone else seems to understand perfectly, and something about that makes it feel impossible to raise your hand.
 - Instead, you just nod along, pretend you get it, and silently hope nobody asks you a follow-up question.
- We’ve all done this. And usually, it’s not a big deal. You figure it out later, or it just doesn’t come up again.
- But there’s one area of life where pretending to understand (or pretending to be certain) can really start to weigh on you: **your faith**.
- If you’ve spent any time in church or around other Christ-followers, you’ve probably sat through sermons, worship songs, and small group conversations where everyone else seemed completely confident about what they believed.
- Somewhere along the way, maybe you started to have questions or even doubts. Something didn’t add up for you, or you went through something difficult that made you wonder if God was really paying attention.
 - Instead of saying something, you just... nodded.
- Or it could be the opposite for you.
- Maybe you didn’t grow up going to church or your faith is still pretty new, and you have real questions... not because you’re faking anything, but because you’re genuinely trying to figure out what you believe.
- Sometimes it can feel like faith is one of those things you’re either “in” or “out” on, with no room for anything in between.
- No matter which of those descriptions sounds more like you, there’s something worth hearing today:

- **Doubt is not a sign your faith is broken. It might actually be a sign it's growing.**
- Today, we're going to look at a story about one of Jesus' closest followers, someone who literally walked alongside Jesus, watched Him perform miracles, and heard Him teach for years... but *still* had doubts.
- What's amazing is how Jesus responded. He didn't shame him. He didn't kick him out.
 - He met him right where he was.

SCRIPTURE (What does God's Word say?)

- The Bible tells us that on the evening of that same day that Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to His disciples
- They were hiding behind locked doors, terrified that the same people who killed Jesus would come after them next.
 - Suddenly, Jesus was just... there. Standing in the room. Alive.
- One of the twelve disciples, a guy named Thomas, wasn't there.
 - We don't know exactly why. He may have needed some space or he was processing his grief on his own.
- When the other disciples found Thomas and told him, "We have seen the Lord!" Thomas didn't just take their word for it.
 - It's difficult to blame him because the person he had given up everything to follow had just been publicly executed.
- Believing Jesus was alive again was the most **unbelievable** claim anyone had ever made.

²⁴ One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. ²⁵ They told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he replied, "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side." ²⁶ Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. "Peace be with you," he said. ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!" ²⁸ "My Lord and my God!" Thomas exclaimed. ²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me." (John 20:24-29 – NLT)

- For centuries, Thomas has been stuck with the nickname, “Doubting Thomas.”
 - That nickname doesn’t tell the whole story.
 - What often gets overlooked is that even while carrying his doubt, he stayed in the community.
 - When Jesus showed up eight days later, Thomas was still there.
- Jesus walked straight up to him and met Thomas in his doubt.
- Thomas’s response was one of the most powerful declarations of faith recorded anywhere in Scripture: “My Lord and my God!”

INSIGHTS (What might this Scripture mean?)

1. Doubt is not the opposite of faith.

- The real opposite of faith isn’t doubt. It’s indifference. It’s not caring enough to even ask the question.
- Thomas doubted because the resurrection *mattered* to him.
- His doubt wasn’t a sign of weakness. It was evidence that his faith meant something to him.
- Thomas isn’t the only person in the Bible who questioned God openly.

¹ O Lord, how long will you forget me? Forever? How long will you look the other way? ² How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul, with sorrow in my heart every day? How long will my enemy have the upper hand? (Psalm 13:1-2 – NLT)

- God preserved these words almost as if to say, “This is what a real relationship with me looks like.”
- If you’re someone who carries questions about God, about the Bible, or about your faith, it might actually mean your faith matters more to you than you realize.

2. Jesus meets us in our doubt.

- Jesus simply met Thomas where he was and gave him exactly what he needed.
- God is not threatened by our questions.

- God is never the one making me feel like I have to hide my questions. He is always the one inviting me to bring them to Him.

⁵ *If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. (James 1:5 – NLT)*

- God is inviting you to come to Him with your questions.
- Even the messy ones. Even the ones you're afraid to say out loud.
- If the One who created everything isn't intimidated by your doubts, maybe your doubts aren't as dangerous as they feel.

3. Wrestling with doubt can lead to a faith that's truly yours.

- After all the doubt, after refusing to believe unless he could see the wounds for himself... Thomas looked at Jesus and said, "My Lord and my God!"
 - This was one of the boldest, most personal declarations of faith in the entire New Testament.
 - It was personal. It was deep. It was worship.
 - It came directly out of his wrestling.
- There's a moment in the Gospel of Mark where a father brings his sick son to Jesus, desperate for help.
 - When Jesus tells him anything is possible for the one who believes, the father responds with one of the most real prayers ever recorded.

²⁴ *The father instantly cried out, "I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24 – NLT)*

- You don't have to wait until you have everything figured out to come to God.
- You don't need perfect faith. You just need real faith.
- Sometimes the most real thing you can say is, "God, I'm not sure about all of this... but I'm here."
- The questions you're carrying right now might be the path to a faith that's deeper, stronger, and more personal than anything you'd have if you had just kept nodding along.
- A faith you've wrestled for is a faith all your own.

ACTION (How could we live this out?)

1. Name your doubts.

- Sometime this week, grab a piece of paper or open a note on your phone and write down one question or doubt you've been carrying about God, faith, or the Bible.
- Don't filter it. Don't try to make it sound spiritual or polished. Just be real.
- Whatever it is, get it out of your head and somewhere you can see it.
- When you name a doubt, it stops being this vague, overwhelming weight and becomes something specific you can wrestle with.

2. Bring your questions to God... and to someone you trust.

- First, talk to God about your doubts. You can be completely real with God.
- He already knows what you're thinking, so there's nothing you could say that would surprise Him.
- Second, find someone you trust and talk to them. It can be as simple as, "Hey, I've been wrestling with something and would love to hear your perspective."
- When you bring your questions to God and to people who care about you, you often discover you're not the only one who's been wondering the same things.

3. Keep showing up.

- Thomas stuck around, even while carrying doubt.
- Faith is a journey, and every journey has stretches where the path ahead isn't clear.
- This week, commit to one specific thing: come back to youth group next week... even if all you can say is, "God, I'm not sure, but I'm here."
- Your doubts don't disqualify you. Your questions aren't evidence that something is wrong with your faith.
- The God who met Thomas in that locked room is the same God who is ready to meet you wherever you are right now.