

# Without a Doubt: Learning from Thomas

*John 20:19-31 NIV*

*Bible Lesson & Activities for Children*



THE **SUNDAY SCHOOL** STORE

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# No Doubt About it!

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Do we need to see things to believe them? How can we know that what we are told is true? This lesson focuses on the importance of trusting God's Word as a reliable source of information, given for us to know and understand who He is. It also reviews the story of "doubting Thomas" to consider that doubts will come, but Christ is with us in those doubts. Genuine faith is belief without physical proof.

We have a tendency to scoff at the "doubter" for his skepticism, but there's an important element to note in this passage. Jesus didn't leave Thomas in his uncertainty; He showed up. He recognized that Thomas was not so strong in his faith, but He came to work him through it. Thomas went on to do amazing things for God's kingdom. We can take from this how much Christ cares about us. He is with us in our doubts, and will help us through them. He is always with us and gives His peace.

**Passage:** John 20:19-31

**Target Audience:** Kindergarten-6th grade

**Materials Needed:** Construction paper; paper plates; crepe paper; glue; markers or crayons; tape; scissors; decorative supplies; paper towel or toilet paper tubes; string; paper bags; Bibles.

## More Resources Online

- Watch the [video demonstration of the object lesson](#).
- Watch the [video example for the craft projects](#).
- Watch the [video Bible story "Jesus Appears to Thomas"](#) from Saddleback Kids Club
- Watch the [video Bible Bible story "After the Tomb"](#) from Crossroads Kids
- For more free illustrations, visit [Christian Clip Arts](#) and [Ministry-To-Children](#)

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# Object Lesson (5 minutes)

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*Greet children and challenge them to discern the truth about some facts...*

Hello, children of God!

We are going to play a little game today. It's a game of "fact or fiction." Do you know what a fact is? That's right, a fact is something that is true. Fiction means it's made up, make-believe. I am going to list some things, and I want you to see if you can figure out whether they are real or fake statements. Are you ready?

List several hard-to-believe facts, and if appropriate, hold up a picture to accompany them. Consider such things as...

There is an animal that poops in the shape of a cube.

There is an underground cave in Missouri full of hundreds of thousands of pounds of cheese!

There are more trees on the Earth than there are stars in the galaxy.

Thomas Jefferson introduced macaroni and cheese to the United States.

Feel free to elaborate as much as time and attention allow.

Now, it just so happens that all of those things are actually true. But how do you know that? How could you verify what I have told you? I mean, there are plenty of information sources out there that might tell you one thing or another. Can we trust everything we hear? Of course not. But it's important to know what we can and should believe. We also need to realize that there are some things we can trust to be true, even without physical evidence. For instance, I have a source of truth right here. Hold up the Bible. Every word of this book is true and valuable. There is plenty of research to back the historical

authenticity of the Bible, but to some extent, we might not always understand what it says. We might find things in here that seem strange or unbelievable, and that's where faith comes in.

There's a story in this Bible about a man who had a hard time with faith. His name was Thomas, and he was one of the disciples of Jesus. Now, after Jesus rose from the grave, He came and appeared to His disciples. He gave them peace, reassured them, and showed Himself. But Thomas wasn't with them at the time, for some reason. We aren't sure just why, but he missed that important encounter with the Lord. The others tried to tell him about it, but he refused to believe them! Maybe he didn't want to be disappointed. Maybe he was just very skeptical, or perhaps the disciples had a habit of pulling pranks on one another. Whatever the reason, he was not around when Jesus came, so he said he wouldn't believe it happened. In fact, he was determined to doubt unless Jesus showed up and Thomas saw him with his own eyes. And that's what Jesus did! He appeared again, a week later, this time when Thomas was there. He told Thomas to look at Him, touch Him, and stop doubting. Thomas felt pretty sheepish right about then! He acknowledged Jesus as Lord and God. Jesus told him that he had believed because he saw, but it was even more wonderful for people who didn't see, and still believed.

There are a couple of great things we can take away from this passage. For one thing, we see here that doubt is okay. Jesus allowed Thomas to doubt. He was there with him, and appeared even after Thomas didn't blindly trust in Him. Jesus is there with us through times of uncertainty, too. There might be times when we have difficulty understanding or believing, and that's okay. We can ask for God's help in working through that. Another important element we see in this story is a special promise Jesus gave. He said "blessed are those who have not seen and still believe." Who does that include? Us! We have not physically seen Jesus, but we know that we can still trust in His word and believe His truth. And He calls us blessed for it. He values our love and faith, even if we struggle at times. We

can rely on Him. We know His words are true, and written so that we may believe. Faith is believing even when we don't see. So let's be people of faith!

Why don't we pray now and ask God to help us in times of doubt?

**Prayer: (Invite the children to repeat each line)**

Dear God,

Thank you for being with us and loving us

Thank you for helping us understand

Help us to trust in you

Even in times of doubt or uncertainty.

Thank you for your love

We love you, God!

In Jesus name, Amen!

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## Game & Activities Suggestions (10 minutes)

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This passage is a helpful reminder that Jesus accepts our doubts, and will help us work through them. It also gives us encouragement that our sightless faith is precious to God, and reassures us that His Word is true. Open with some games or discussions to spark thought and introduce themes. Here are some ideas:

- Believe it or not? List several interesting trivia facts, and have students guess if they are true or not. Discuss the importance of discerning and learning truth.
- Two truths and a lie...have students share three facts about themselves, one of which should be made up. Invite the other students to guess which item is false.
- Faith without sight: invite students to identify items inside of a “blind bag,” using only their sense of touch. How can they be sure of what they are feeling without seeing it?
- Spirit of peace...in this passage, Jesus breathed on His disciples and gave them peace, giving them the power of forgiveness and blessing. Discuss things that bring peace and tranquility.
- Nail-scarred hands relay: have large cut-outs of handprints posted on a wall. Give students small circle stickers, and have them take turns going back and forth to tack the sticker in the center of the hand, returning to the group relay-style.

Today’s passage is a comforting reminder of how we can have faith in Jesus, and know that He is with us no matter what. Even in times of doubt and uncertainty, He allows us to question and works through struggles with us.

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## Main Bible Teaching (15 minutes)

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This passage could be a great one to encourage participation and have students act out parts. You could also read directly from the Bible, have students take turns. Pause between verse sections to review what the story is about.

**John 20:19-23 NIV** *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" (20) After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. (21) Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (22) And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. (23) If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."*

Give the context for this passage: this is taking place right after the Resurrection. Jesus had returned from the dead, but only a few women had seen Him alive so far. Here He appears to the disciples, coming into the room even though the doors were locked. Locked doors mean nothing to a resurrected Lord, after all! Look at the first thing He did. He breathed on them and gave them peace from the Holy Spirit. It sort of seems an understatement to read that "the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord." Glad is only the beginning! They must have been utterly overjoyed. The teacher and master they thought was dead was there with them again!

**Ask:** What makes you feel peaceful in times of trouble?

What do you think you would do if Jesus showed up in our classroom?



**John 20:24-25 NIV** Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. (25) So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

We aren't sure where Thomas was when this was going on, but He missed the important reveal. The disciples tried to tell him the great news, and he wouldn't believe it. Even though they all had the same story, he refused to believe them.

**Ask:** If someone tells you something, are you more inclined to believe it right away or be skeptical?

**John 20:26-29 NIV** A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." (28) Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (29) Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

This is an encouraging passage for multiple reasons. First, Jesus gave Thomas a sort of "do-over." He knew that Thomas had doubted, but instead of letting him live in that, he showed up and gave him the opportunity to have his doubts erased. He allowed Thomas to see him and touch him. We can be reminded here that Jesus cares about us, even through our doubts. He will walk with us through times of uncertainty and will guide and comfort us.



The other wonderful thing here, for us, is that Jesus says “blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Well, we haven’t seen Him face to face, live and in person. Yet we believe. So this could be referring to us! Jesus calls us blessed when we believe without sight. That is what faith means. We believe, even though we have not yet seen. And that’s a special and wonderful blessing for us!

**Ask:** What would you tell someone who asked how you knew that Jesus really rose from the dead as the Son of God? How can you know and believe?

**John 20:30–31 NIV** *Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. (31) But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

The Gospels tell us a lot of amazing things about the life and work of Jesus. But there’s even more to the story. The words of the Bible are trustworthy and true, and give us terrific stories. But there’s even more that we don’t have written down.

Yet what we do have in Scripture is given to help us believe in Jesus. We can be certain that God’s word is real and reliable, and that He is with us now and always!

**Ask:** What do you like about the Bible?

Close with prayer, thanking God for helping us through doubt and giving His word.

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## Craft Activities (15 minutes)

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It's easy to denounce Thomas for his moment of skepticism, but it's important to let children know that they might sometimes have doubts, and that is acceptable. Jesus walks with us in our doubts, and will help us to have faith. We can call on Him for support and know that faith is believing without sight! These crafts are based on the second half of John 20. A simple bookmark reminds us that "these things are written so you may believe." A "wind of the spirit windsock" celebrates Jesus breathing on the disciples. And "seeing eye binoculars" remind us to trust in things, even when we don't see them physically.

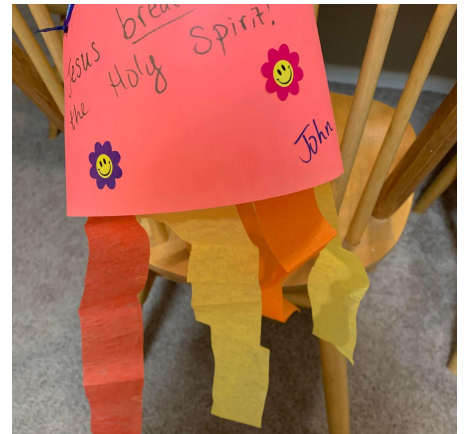
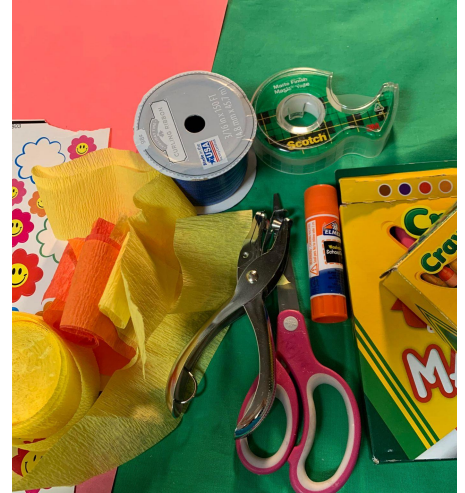
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# Craft one: "Wind of the Spirit"

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You will need:

- Construction paper or cardstock
- Crepe paper
- Ribbon or string
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- Glue or tape
- Markers or crayons
- Stickers, glitter, decoration, etc.



Procedure:

1. Cut paper into a long strip, taping two pieces together if necessary.
2. Decorate the paper with verses, captions, and extra items as desired.
3. Tape, glue, or staple pieces of crepe paper to the back of the paper.
4. Attach the ends together in a cylindrical shape. Attach a string or ribbon to hang in a prominent place and watch the "wind" blow through.

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## Craft Two: “Seeing-Eye Binoculars”

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You will need:

- Toilet paper or paper towel rolls (empty)
- Construction paper or card stock
- String or ribbon
- Glue or tape
- Popsicle sticks (optional)
- Markers or crayons
- Scissors



Procedure:

1. Decorate the tubes with stickers, color, and other elements as desired.
2. Use popsicle sticks to attach the tubes together, resembling binoculars.
3. Attach a caption and/or verse.
4. Add string or ribbon to be able to “wear” the binoculars and remember that faith (unlike binoculars) is not by sight!



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## Craft Three: "These Things are Written"

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You will need:

- Scissors
- Construction paper
- Markers or decorating materials
- Ribbon or string
- Markers or crayons
- Additional decorations (stickers, etc.)



Procedure:

1. Cut paper into rectangle or other desired shapes, perhaps with pointed edges.
2. Decorate the paper with verses, captions, or pictures as desired.
3. Add stickers if desired.
4. Attach a ribbon or string tassel.



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## John 20:29 NIV

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*Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*







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## Word Search Puzzle

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Thomas - Doubt - Jesus - Spirit - Father - Twin

Disciple - Believe - Peace - Holy - Forgiveness - Twelve

N F R J A F J R N F J  
U J N N T T H O M A S  
X S Q T H U S T H T L  
O B K W R M P G O H B  
T L D I S C I P L E C  
H T Y N J A R P Y R K  
Y K W B E L I E V E P  
Q E B V S Z T A D N J  
G I D O U B T C B D M  
Q B Q P S T W E L V E  
F O R G I V E N E S S

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## Word Search Answers

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N	F	R	J	A	F	J	R	N	F	J
U	J	N	N	T	T	H	O	M	A	S
X	S	Q	T	H	U	S	T	H	T	L
O	B	K	W	R	M	P	G	O	H	B
T	L	D	I	S	C	I	P	L	E	C
H	T	Y	N	J	A	R	P	Y	R	K
Y	K	W	B	E	L	I	E	V	E	P
Q	E	B	V	S	Z	T	A	D	N	J
G	I	D	O	U	B	T	C	B	D	M
Q	B	Q	P	S	T	W	E	L	V	E
F	O	R	G	I	V	E	N	E	S	S