

Thomas Believes

Grades
1-2

BELIEVE

JOHN 20:19-31

What's happening in this story?

Jesus' grace—not Thomas's doubt—is the focus of this story. Thomas is a follower of Jesus with some questions—questions similar to those the other disciples had, and got answered, when Jesus appeared among them one week earlier. But Thomas was not there when Jesus appeared to the others, and he was not going to be fooled. People do not, as a rule, rise from the dead. He needed to know this wasn't a hoax—he needed to see and touch Jesus' wounds. Jesus gives Thomas exactly what he says he needs. Thomas responds in faith with the words "My Lord and my God!"

What does this story mean for kids?

Kids understand the need to question, and can identify with Thomas. They probably have many questions about this story, in fact—questions that should be encouraged. It is important for kids to know that God loves questions; that Jesus encouraged questions in his teaching and storytelling; and that Thomas's critical thinking and desire to be sure are important aspects of faith, just as they are important in other realms of life. God never asks us to sign onto something glibly.

Why this theme?

Belief isn't something that is above doubt. Kids will have questions—everyone doubts at some point in their life. But this story reminds us that true belief comes from asking questions, that faith is interwoven with doubt and grows from it.

AGE LEVEL TIP

First and second graders have so many questions! Sometimes adults may get tired of answering them all, but questions are one way we know kids are engaged. As you lead the lesson, reinforce what kids will hear in today's video: we learn by questioning. Encourage kids' questions during every activity today.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Markers

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Assorted padlocks with keys (3-5)
- Hand mirror

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Spread closed padlocks out on a table. Spread keys around, adding an extra key if you can. Invite kids to find the correct key for each lock and open it. Make a connection for kids to today's story. **Jesus gets through a locked door in our story today.**

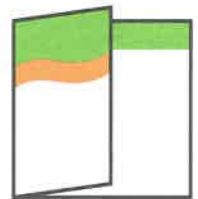
Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

If you could ask Jesus any question, what would it be? Allow some time here for all kids to think and ask. **All of us have questions, but some people are afraid to ask. Jesus wants us to ask questions to help us believe. Today's Bible story is about one person who wasn't afraid to ask Jesus questions.**

Pray together: **Dear God, may I always remember that believing doesn't mean being absolutely certain. Part of believing is wondering and questioning. Amen.**

Pass out leaflets.

Hold up today's leaflet. **Show us how you greet your family and friends when you see them.** Watch kids' responses. Then point to the examples on today's leaflet. Add other examples as well. **We say "hello." We wave or hug. Sometimes we shake hands. We**



use sign language. Some people even kiss. Now point to Jesus. **Jesus greeted his followers by saying, "Peace be with you." Turn to your neighbors and say, "Peace be with you!"** Encourage kids to greet everyone the way Jesus did. Collect their leaflets until Respond.

Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

The kids have a lot of questions for Pastor Donna. Do you ever have questions for our pastor?

View Episode 8, "Any Questions?," on the Year Gold Spring PreK–Grade 2 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- **Who has a problem with asking questions?**
- **What does Victor think will happen if his friends ask questions?**
- **Who gets Victor to think about asking questions differently?**
- **Is there ever a reason you don't ask questions? Why not?**
- **Asking questions is one way to learn. What are other ways of learning?**



Open your Whirl Kids Story Bibles.

Let's find our story for today! Help kids find "Thomas Believes" on page 338. Before you read, invite kids to look for ten scared and confused faces.

Read the story and Ada and Otto's questions and comments on each page.

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- **Why were the disciples hiding?**
- **How did Jesus get through the locked door? What did he say?**
- **Who did not believe Jesus was alive?**
- **What do you have trouble believing?**
- **How can we believe when we can't see Jesus?**



Gather near the Wall Chart to place today's sticker.

Point out the Testament (New), Bible section (Gospels), and character image (Risen Jesus). **When Thomas first heard Jesus was alive, it was hard for him to believe. Let's add a sticker to remind us of what Jesus showed Thomas** (Jesus' hands with holes from the nails). Point to the corresponding images of Jesus' hands and Thomas on pages 338 and 341 in the Whirl Kids Story Bible.



Play together!

With the hand mirror and Whirl Kids Story Bible in hand, gather kids together in a circle on the floor. Open the Bible to page 339, and point to the first picture of the disciple locking the door. **This disciple looks scared! Let's see if I can copy his face.** Make a similar face. **Now it's your turn to copy the disciples' faces.** Pass the Bible and hand mirror around the circle. Ask kids to choose a face that hasn't been copied yet from page 339, and then 341, to show the group and to see in the mirror. If you have a small group, have kids take two turns. **In our story today the disciples were scared, surprised, joyous, unbelieving, and happy!** Going around the circle, have each kid shout out, "Jesus is alive!" **Jesus blesses everyone who has not seen him but still believes.**

BIBLE BIT

The Greek word *apistos* means unbelief. Today Thomas does not doubt Jesus. He just has a hard time believing Jesus would be with him and the other apostles after dying.

WATCH IT AGAIN

Keep track of all the different ways Victor stops his friends from asking questions. Which ways are simple? Which ways are complicated?

OUR CHURCH

Hang a poster-size copy of a creed (such as the Apostles' or Nicene Creed) on a wall in your gathering space. Ask everyone to decorate the borders with self-portrait stick figures.

RESPOND 10

Pass out leaflets and markers.

Unfold and tear off leaflet square.

1. **Seeing is one way to believe. Another way is to ask questions. How do you think asking questions helps you believe things?** Allow kids to respond. **Asking questions helps us understand and learn. Understanding and learning help us believe. So asking questions is a good thing!**
2. Hold up the square. **On our leaflet today are picture hints with answers to some questions. But there are no questions! Our job is to ask the questions by looking at the pictures. Let's do the top, orange question, and answer together.**
3. Look at the two clues: the picture of the disciples and the Answer word "house." **What question can we ask for the answer to be "house"?** (for example: Where were the disciples hiding?) **Write your question in the open space on the left side of the orange row.**
4. Divide kids into four groups to work on the remaining questions. Suggestions for some of the questions might include: Who was alive? Who heard Jesus say "Peace be with you?" Who had to touch Jesus to believe? Who blesses everyone?
5. Bring kids together again when groups are finished. Ask each group to ask their questions. Have all kids say the answers together. **God welcomes all of our questions!**
6. **How did asking these questions help you learn something about our story today? How did asking questions help you learn or remember something about Jesus?** Allow kids to respond.
7. **Jesus wants us to tell everyone that he is alive. Jesus also wants us to believe!**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

The disciples were hiding because Jesus had died and they were afraid. But Jesus came to them in the locked room saying, "Peace be with you." Thomas was not there. He did not believe at first. He had questions. When Jesus showed his hands, Thomas believed!

Pass out leaflet panels and markers.

Write "Peace be with you!" around the picture of Jesus. Share it with someone after class. Ask them if they know about Thomas.

Send kids out with a blessing.

Circle up with kids. **God blesses all of us. And that means me** (place a hand on your chest). **And that means you** (place your other hand on the shoulder of the kid next to you). Each kid passes the blessing by repeating those words and actions. When the blessing makes it back to you, say, **Go and bless the world.**

Thank kids for coming today. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.