

Doubting Thomas

Welcome

Intro: Wendell's story

- Wendell, what was life like when we met?
- What happened next?
- What happened over the last two years.
- What's next?
- **Vision:** Helping people follow Jesus and experience the hope of redemption. **Prayer**

Read: John 20:24–29

Where does doubt come from?

- **Pain/Trama:** When Jesus was arrested, beaten and crucified all the disciples understood this meant they were in danger, their families were in danger and the movement was over. They had given up everything to follow Jesus. Their Jewish community, their families, their jobs, literally everything. Thomas was afraid, hurting, disappointed, confused, and abandoned. He is not stubborn—he is wounded. **Have you ever felt that way?**
- **Isolation: Thomas was isolated.** *“But Thomas... was not with them when Jesus came.”* (v. 24) When Jesus first appeared to the disciples, Thomas was absent. He was away from his brothers, alone, isolated and missed Jesus. **How do you respond when you are in pain?** Sometimes our darkest doubts grow in isolated seasons.
- **Proverbs 18:1,** “Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.”
- **Hebrews 10:24–25**

Modern psychology says that:

- Trauma distorts our perception, our understanding of reality and increases doubt.
- Emotional pain reduces our ability to trust and increases our need for certainty.
- *“Trauma survivors often seek concrete proof before feeling safe again.”* (APA trauma research)

Thomas isn't faithless—he's hurt.

How does Thomas process his doubt? Verse 25, *“Unless I see... I will never believe.”*

Thomas processes it in community, honestly and openly. Stuffing doubt will not make it go away. The church should be a place where we feel free to admit and talk about doubt because if we don't, our secrets isolate us and our doubts grow. Even Jesus, when he was isolated and alone, openly processes his doubt.

- *“Why have You forgotten me?”*
- *“If there is any other way...”*

Psychology has learned that naming our doubt reduces its power.

- The act of confessing doubt often decreases anxiety and increases clarity.

When Thomas names it, speaks honestly and truthfully; God meets him there.

How does Jesus respond to our doubt?

1. **Jesus pursues the doubter.** Verse 27, "The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them."

Explain: Jesus was not offended and did not withdraw. Jesus moved toward Thomas and we should do the same.

Illustrate: Jesus does this over and over and over. He invites people into relationship and is even slow to ask them to believe. It is as if He assumes, if you are with me, soon you will believe. That should be true for us.

Apply: We should not be offended or withdraw when people have questions. We should move toward them. In fact, today people want to belong, before the believe. This was true for Thomas. He belonged before he believed.

2. **Jesus offers peace.** Verse 27, "Peace be with you."

Explain: This is so obvious, it is easy to miss. Before Jesus shows up, Thomas is afraid, uncertain, confused, and disappointed. When Jesus shows up all of those feelings are replaced by peace. Learning about God is not enough. We need to experience Him.

Illustrate: Worship/practices

Argue: Galatians 5:22-peace, Disciples in the storm- peace be still.

Apply: The presence of Christ brings peace. If we do not create space for Him, we feel alone, we lose our peace.

3. **Jesus offers evidence.** Verse 27, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side."

Explain: Jesus gives him the evidence he needs to believe. I have talked to people before who say, how can you prove there is a God. Maybe this is all just a computer simulation. I am not sure we can find that kind of proof for anything. However, we can follow the evidence. Today there is so much evidence. In fact, one of my favorite books is, "I do not have enough faith to be an atheist." In other words, if you just consider the evidence, with an open heart and mind, it takes more faith to reject God than to believe.

We all have to put our faith in someone or something. We all have a life philosophy that drives our approach to life.

- **What makes me happy?**
- **Why am I here, what is my purpose?**
- **How do relationships work?**
- **Is family important? What makes for a happy family?**
- **What is my responsibility to my fellow man?**

If you look at our world, if you are a student of history, what you will discover is this; Jesus and his followers have produced more blessings in this world than any other single force and it is not close.

Apply: Will you consider the evidence?

4. **Jesus invites us to live by faith.** Verse 27, "Believe!"

Explain: After seeing and hearing Jesus, Thomas responds, "My Lord and my God." This is the strongest confession of Christ in the Gospels and it comes from the one with the

most doubt. Psychology calls this “**constructive doubt**”—questioning that leads to growth, deeper understanding, and resilience.

In Scripture, doubt often becomes a catalyst for greater revelation:

- Moses (Exodus 3–4)
- Gideon (Judges 6)
- Elijah (1 Kings 19)

Illustrate: Wendell, Me, you

Illustrate: Hunting lamp- lamp unto my feet, light unto my path. We will never know the end in the beginning because the journey prepares you for the destination.

Argue: Hebrews 11:6, faith in the truth

Apply: My faith, who or what I am trusting drives all the rest. Is it America, money, knowledge, another person or Christ?

5. **Jesus promises a blessing. Verse 28**

Explain: Jesus says to all the disciples, “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing.” That’s us! Jesus is not elevating blind faith. Jesus is blessing trust without immediate clarity. Faith Is Most Meaningful in Darkness. Faith grows when we learn to trust God not just when we see Him—but especially when we don’t.

Illustrate: What God has is better although we have to let some things die.

Argue: Hebrews 11:1, “Faith is... the evidence of things not seen.”

2 Corinthians 5:7, “We walk by faith, not by sight.”

Apply: What do you need to trust God with? Moment

Invitation

- Let’s be honest about our doubt
- Let’s pursue the presence of Christ
- Let’s examine the evidence
- Let’s live by faith
- Let’s trust God for the blessing