

Small Group Guide

Leader Notes for September 13, 2026

Icebreaker

What is something you believed for way too long before discovering you were completely wrong? How did you finally find out?

Observation

1. In Luke 7:18–20, what question did John the Baptist send his disciples to ask Jesus, and why is that question surprising coming from John?

John wasn't someone who knew very little about Jesus. He had baptized Jesus, witnessed the Holy Spirit descend upon Him, heard God identify Jesus as His Son, and even encouraged his own disciples to follow Jesus. Yet now John was sitting in prison, and his circumstances didn't seem to match what he believed about Jesus.

Follow up: Why do you think difficult circumstances can cause us to question things about God that we once felt certain about?

2. What two circumstances seem to have contributed to John's doubts?

John was dealing with **personal tragedy** and **unmet expectations**. He had faithfully served God, yet he was sitting in prison. At the same time, Jesus wasn't behaving exactly as John and others expected the Messiah to behave. Doubt often creeps in when what we believe about God collides with what we are experiencing.

Follow up: Which tends to challenge our faith more, painful circumstances or God not doing what we expected Him to do? Why?

Interpretation

3. What can we learn from what John did with his doubts in Luke 7:18–20?

John had several options. He could bottle up his doubts, give in to his doubts, or take his doubts to Jesus. John chose to take his questions directly to the source of his faith. Faith is not the absence of questions. Faith knows where to take them. John also involved two of his disciples, reminding us that we don't have to wrestle with our doubts alone.

Follow up: Why do you think some Christians are hesitant to admit when they have doubts or questions about God?

4. In Luke 7:21–23, how did Jesus respond to John's doubts?

Jesus didn't condemn John for asking the question. Instead, He pointed John toward what He was already doing. The blind could see, the lame could walk, people with leprosy were healed, the deaf could hear, the dead were raised, and the poor were hearing the Good News. Jesus was essentially telling John, "Look at the evidence."

Follow up: Why is remembering what God has already done helpful when we are struggling to understand what He is doing right now?

5. How can one painful season cause us to forget God's faithfulness in the rest of our lives?

We can easily develop a "what have You done for me lately?" mentality with God. One unanswered prayer, disappointment, or difficult chapter can become so large in our minds that we forget years of God's faithfulness. When doubt creeps in, we need to remember the prayers God has answered, the doors He has opened, the needs He has provided, the times He has sustained us, and the ways Jesus has changed our lives.

Follow up: What is one specific example of God's faithfulness in your past that strengthens your faith today?

Application

6. Romans 10:17 says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." What connection do you see between God's Word and the strength of our faith?

Our faith weakens when we stop feeding our hearts and minds with God's Word. When John struggled, Jesus pointed him back to truths John would have recognized from Isaiah 35 and Isaiah 61. Jesus didn't merely give John emotional reassurance. He reminded him that God's promises were being fulfilled.

Follow up: What practical habits help you stay anchored to God's Word when your emotions or circumstances are telling you something different?

7. Compare Jesus' words in Luke 7:22 with Isaiah 35:5–6 and Isaiah 61:1. What is significant about the part of Isaiah 61:1 that Jesus did not mention?

Isaiah spoke about the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, good news being preached to the poor, and **prisoners being freed**. John would have known those promises, but Jesus didn't include the part about prisoners being freed. That omission would have been especially meaningful because **John was sitting in prison**. Jesus was reassuring John that He truly was the Messiah, but He wasn't promising John that his circumstances would change. John would have to trust Jesus without knowing how his own story would end.

Follow up: Why is it sometimes harder to trust Jesus when we know He has the power to change our circumstances, but He doesn't?

8. Which of the three responses to doubt do you most need right now?

When doubts creep in:

1. **Take my doubts to Jesus.**
2. **Remember what Jesus has already done.**
3. **Stay anchored to God's Word.**

Doubt doesn't have to drive us away from Jesus. If handled correctly, our questions can actually drive us toward Him.

Follow up: Is there a question, disappointment, or unmet expectation that you need to bring honestly to Jesus right now?

Challenge

This week, identify one area where doubt has been creeping into your faith. Instead of ignoring it or allowing it to grow, do what John did. Take it directly to Jesus. Then do two things. Remember one specific example of God's faithfulness in your past and find one promise in God's Word that speaks to what you are facing today. If needed, share what you're wrestling with with another mature believer who can encourage you and help you stay anchored in truth. Remember: I can trust Jesus even when I don't understand His plan. I can still trust His heart even when my life doesn't go as I've planned.

Prayer

Father, thank You that You are not threatened by our questions or our doubts. When what we believe about You collides with what we are experiencing, help us bring our questions directly to Jesus instead of allowing them to pull us away from Him. Remind us of all the ways You have been faithful in the past, and keep our hearts and minds anchored to Your Word. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.