**FIRST STEPS TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Session 2 of 4

# Jesus and Thomas

### MEETING AIM

To explore what it means for us to trust in Jesus, even when we cannot see him.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

John 20:19-31

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

We love to use this story as a finger-pointing, ‘look, a disciple got it wrong’ moment. But perhaps instead, we should use this story to help us remember that faith is not always easy. For our youngest children, who are beginning to question things for themselves and ask whether the stories they hear match up to their own experiences and discoveries of truth, this session provides a safe space where doubts can be articulated and questions asked as we, together, ask Jesus to reveal himself to us.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can) and ask the children to think about a time when something or someone has surprised them, and to share their stories together.

### PLAY – 10 mins

**You will need:** a postcard; scissors

Gather the children together and ask them if they believe you can walk through a postcard. The chances are that they won’t believe you can, so tell them that you are going to show them how it can be done. If you have never seen this trick before, full instructions can be found [here](http://www.bbc.co.uk/norfolk/kids/science_experiments/postcard_trick/postcard_trick.shtml).

Once you have completed your trick, say: sometimes things seem very unlikely and they have to be seen to be believed! Today’s story is about somebody who found it hard to accept the truth, until he saw it for himself. If you can, help the children to do the trick themselves (you’ll need some child-safe scissors).

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** a volunteer to play the part of Thomas; an appropriate costume (optional)

Before the session, encourage the volunteer playing Thomas to learn the script so that they can tell the story to the children as though sharing their own recollections. It may help to dress your volunteer in a simple Bible character costume, to set the scene. Gather the children together to sit in front of Thomas, who should begin the story:

Hello, I’m one of Jesus’ friends. You might have heard of me – my name is Thomas, although sometimes I get called Doubting Thomas. I wonder if you know what that means? I get called Doubting Thomas because I doubted that Jesus really had come back to life; I found it really hard to believe! Well, you would too, wouldn’t you?

You see, we’d all been there when Jesus had been taken to die. It was so very sad and not what we’d expected to happen at all. In the few days afterwards, we tried to lie low, me and the other disciples. We weren’t sure if the Romans were going to come after us too, so we thought it best to hide away. Then some of the others said they’d seen Jesus! Actually seen him, large as life and walking around again!

I think it’s pretty fair to say I found this hard to believe; well, wouldn’t you? How could he be alive again? It just wasn’t possible!

I said I wouldn’t believe it unless I saw him with my own eyes, right in front of me. And if I could see the scars in his hands and side, then I’d know it was actually him and not just the others hoping for the best.

Well, you’ll never imagine what happened. He came! Jesus, I mean! He came to see me, and the others too, while we were hiding away safely. He came right up to me and showed me the scars in his hands and side too. I knew it was him; Jesus, the Son of God had come back to life again. Jesus is alive!

Jesus challenged me then. He said it was easy for me to believe because I’d seen him with my own eyes. It was far better for the people who hadn’t seen Jesus but still believed in him; they were really blessed.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

* What is your favourite part of this story?
* Can you understand why Thomas found it hard to believe?
* What would you ask Jesus if you saw him?
* What helps you to believe in Jesus?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** Scratch art boards; tools

Scratch art boards are readily available in plain A5 cards or ready-cut shapes from a variety of craft stores, including Baker Ross. Explain to the children that Jesus revealed himself to Thomas by appearing directly in front of them. How does he reveal himself to us? Invite the children to use the scratch art to reveal a picture, symbol or question in response to the story today. They may choose to write a question they would like to ask Jesus, or draw something which helps them to put their trust in him in their day-to-day lives, or a scene from the story today. Use the way of revealing coloured background to the board as a reminder of the way Jesus revealed himself to Thomas.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

Invite children to participate in the actions, as you lead the group in prayer:

Dear Jesus, even though we cannot see you with our eyes, help us to see that you are right here with us. *Hold your hands up to your eyes, as though forming a pair of glasses or binoculars.*

Even though we cannot feel you with our hands, help us to feel you close to us today. *Hold your hands out, palms up in front of you.*

Even when it is hard, help us to trust that you are right here with us. *Stamp your foot.*

Amen.

**BECKY MAY**

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