**JOURNEYING TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Session 2 of 4

# Jesus and Thomas

### MEETING AIM

To weigh up the evidence of Jesus’ resurrection and make an honest and considered response to it.

### 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 situation.

In this session, we see Jesus’ resurrection through the eyes of Thomas, the ‘doubter’, a man we can probably identify with! Be aware that different members of the group are likely to have different responses to Jesus’ resurrection, and try to make it a safe space for them to be able to honestly share where they’re at, without being frightened or reactive to people honestly sharing their doubts.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

As people join you, share any refreshments you have. Ask the group to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Start a conversation about things that are too good to be true. Do the group know what that means? Have they ever had moments that were so wonderful, or got some news that was so good that it felt too good to be true? Have you ever been told something that was so great that you didn’t believe it at first?

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

Play the game ‘two truths and a lie’ with the group, to introduce the theme of believing the unbelievable! This game works where people take turns to say three things about themselves. Two of these statements have to be true but one of them should be a lie. The other people have to guess which one is the lie. It’s also a good game to get to know each other. It might be helpful to prepare your statements and go first to give an example. This gives the group time to prepare their own statements!

### BIBLE EXPLORATION – 10 mins

**You will need:** Bibles

Read the story of Jesus and Thomas together from John 20:19-31. You could help the group engage a bit better with the story by asking them to take turns reading out a verse each – that way they have to follow the passage!

Then split the group in half and ask them to role play a debate between disciples who have seen Jesus alive again, and those who haven’t and don’t believe. You might want to set some rules about how you manage listening to each other, or act as a ‘chair’ to the debate, to make sure that they hear each other. Ask the disciples who’ve seen Jesus to try to convince them that Jesus is risen, and ask the other half to make it hard for them to convince them by arguing back with different points.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Chat about the story using these questions, encouraging everyone to join in if they want to:

* Why do you think it would be hard to believe that Jesus had risen again?
* If you were one of the disciples, do you think you’d believe that Jesus had risen again without seeing him? What would it take to convince you?
* How do we still see this debate going on today? Which side of the discussion do you feel you sit on most usually? (Bear in mind that this could be a vulnerable question to ask within a Christian context, and it will take a lot of bravery to share if a member finds it difficult to believe in Jesus’ resurrection. It might be more appropriate to allow space for members to share than try to convince them.)
* What are the things that make it hard to believe in Jesus’ resurrection?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE – 10 mins

**You will need:** paper; felt-tip pens

Make sure each group member has a piece of paper, and ask them to draw around their hands onto their paper. These are representations of Jesus’ hands.

Ask them to consider what reasons or evidence they have to believe that Jesus is alive, and to write these on Jesus’ hands. It might be to do with facts, or people who’ve told them, or moments that they’ve felt connection with Jesus alive in the world today. Feel free to continue this activity in the atmosphere of discussion if you feel that that’s more helpful to the group, or alternatively in silence with some music playing to give individuals space to consider their own thoughts. At the end you might ask the group if they’d like to share the reason that they have for believing Jesus died and rose again.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

Lead the group on a guided meditation, using their imaginations to think about what Jesus might say to them today. Encourage the group to close their eyes and sit or lie down comfortably as you read out:

You’re in the room with the disciples, still reeling from the shock of losing Jesus, feeling fragile and afraid now that the person you’d put all your hope in has died. The atmosphere is sombre, and you’re worried about what other people might think of you now that you’ve lost Jesus.

Some friends come to you filled with a strange kind of energy and euphoria. They tell you that they’ve seen Jesus. They look like they believe it, but it’s hard to imagine. Are they lying to you? Are they crazy with grief? Or could they be telling the truth? Is that just too impossible to be real? What would it mean if they were telling the truth? A strange kind of longing for hope stirs in you.

As you mull it over – is it true or is it too crazy? – Jesus walks into the room, even though the doors are locked. In his gentle way he walks over to you and kneels next to you, so that you’re both at eye level, and he gives you that piercing stare into your eyes that had become so familiar. He’s there in front of you, but it’s still almost too much to believe. But then he speaks…what does he say to you?

Give the group some space in the quiet to listen to and imagine what Jesus would say to them in that moment. When you feel they’ve had a good amount of time to ponder and think over how Jesus might respond, maybe a few minutes, finish the time of silence with a prayer out loud so that the group know that the time is ending, and to help them conclude this time.

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