

CALVARY CHAPEL COSTA MESA

– COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE –

Jesus Encounters Series “Jesus & the Doubter” – John 20:19-31

FELLOWSHIP

The disciple Thomas would have felt right at home in Missouri. License plates proudly display the slogan, “Show Me State.” Legends abound with how this reputation was earned, but one popular account was attributed to Congressman Willard Duncan Vandiver, who served in the House of Representatives from 1897 to 1903. During a speech at a U. S. Navel banquet he announced, “I come from a state that raises corn and cotton and cockleburs and Democrats, and frothy eloquence neither convinces nor satisfies me. I am from Missouri. You have got to show me.” There may be a little bit of Missouri in all of us. How often have you heard someone say, “I’ll believe it when I see it.” Is it really any surprise that our own experiences and the laws of nature get seniority over someone else’s fanciful claims? Thomas seems to get a bad rap for something most of us would probably be tempted to do ourselves. Standing somewhere between skepticism and idealism, most of his statements are that of a realist. But this was not to say Thomas wasn’t committed. When he said in Jn 11.16, “We might as well go die with him,” he wasn’t sarcastically mocking their mission, he was counting the cost. Later, when Jesus was explaining what their mission would be like without him, Thomas said, “Wait, I don’t understand, can’t you make it clearer?” (Jn 14.5) It’s no surprise that when his friends were trying to convince him of the biggest miracle of all, he dismisses their enthusiasm and exaggerates his own personal requirements by saying, “I’ll believe it when I can thrust my hand into the wound.” The dilemma of unbelief verses faith, as portrayed in John’s Gospel, reaches its climax here in this story of Thomas.

READ & DISCUSS

Read out loud together as a group John 20:19-31 and discuss any observations that would be applicable today. Jesus finished his exchange with Thomas by looking forward to future generations who would have to grapple with the decision of belief:

John 20:29 Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

- Sometimes the deeper the skepticism, the deeper the belief. The kind of commitment that Thomas was willing to make was matched by the highest level of expectations. Jesus didn’t dismiss or scold that kind of thoroughness, because he knew the kind of faith and commitment which would follow if satisfied. *What were the circumstances for you moving from unbelief to faith? What kinds of doubts did God answer for you? The Bible and Christianity encourage investigation. What questions are you still seeking answers for?*
- Thomas’ heart finally overwhelmed his intellect during his encounter with Jesus, and he became the first person to address him as God. While the rest of the group was happy in their restored relationship with Jesus, Thomas now saw the Messiah as the object of his personal faith. He was able to give Jesus a theological allegiance that the others would only later reach. **Read John 1:1-3, 14 and especially v. 18 in several translations.** *Why is Jesus the best way for people to be introduced to God? What kind of doubts do people have about God that can be answered by looking at Jesus?*
- Miracles are an intervention into the natural order and secular science tries to discount them. *What were some of the evidences for Jesus’ resurrection? Why are miracles important to the Gospel? Why are they important today? What miracles have you seen or experienced?*

PRAY Jesus’ greeted the disciples with “Peace!” (v.21) This harkens back to Gideon, Daniel and those times when the angel of the Lord would commission someone while they were still dealing with their fears. Jesus said to his disciples, as he anointed them with the Holy Spirit, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” Pray together that we would act in faith, be filled with the Spirit, and share the Gospel of forgiveness with our neighbors. (v.23)



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Based on Pastor Brian Brodersen’s message on July 23, 2017.

Watch: <https://cccm.com/teaching/jesus-encounters/video/jesus-and-the-doubter/>