

My Lord and my God

Planning

Theme Who is this?

Nine weeks in which we explore how the Easter readings reveal different faces of Jesus. Read more about the theme on page 4 and in *Month by month* on the [WEB](#).

Week 3 of 9

My Lord and my God John 20.19-31

Thomas feels left out when the other disciples have seen the risen Jesus. Jesus appears again and Thomas recognises him as 'My Lord and my God'.

This week's reading provides an opportunity to:

- celebrate the resurrection of Jesus
- explore the resurrection of Jesus through the story of Thomas' encounter
- reflect on the relationship between belief and faith.

Other Bible readings for this week

RCL Easter 2 Year A, Acts 2.14a,22-32, Psalm 16, 1 Peter 1.3-9

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Week by week

Bible notes
Prayers
PostScript: up-to-the minute comment
Bible Study
Children's Sheet
Templates for craft activities
Further resources: film, website and book suggestions
Links to other materials for this week

Prepare your session

Read **John 20.19-31** and the *Bible notes* on page 40. Choose from the materials to suit the age range, length of session and preferences of your group. Integrate prayers and singing at appropriate moments.

For shorter sessions, use the story opposite and write *A creed* on page 41.

Prayers

Additional prayers can be found within this weekly material. All prayer text is on the [WEB](#).

Why did I miss it?

God, let us not be like Thomas and miss out.

He did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus because he was not there.

He did believe when he saw Jesus.

Help us to believe without seeing.

Jesus died and rose again for us.

Amen.

We have seen the Lord

If only it were so easy, Lord, to put my hand in yours.

If only it were so easy, Lord, to take your words on board.

But sometimes, Lord, I have my doubts, and I wonder what it means.

Come back to me, Lord, and hold out your hands and I will follow you.

Amen.

They were lost

The disciples were feeling lost, you showed them the way.

The disciples didn't know what to believe, you gave them the truth.

You died, and yet you rose again.

Lord, you are our life.

Amen.

Music

See [WEB](#) for key to abbreviations.

Sing

All over the world the Spirit is moving

Come on and celebrate (MP)

Great news (SB)

I believe in Jesus (SOF)

I need faith (KS)

Jesus in the garden (C&P)

Jesus isn't dead any more (KS)

Jesus put this song into our hearts

Shalom, my friend

Risen! Risen! (KS)

Gather

Make this a time of celebration.

Remember, we are celebrating the gift of faith, not a burden.

Prepare the space

Create a large symbol of peace in the centre of your space, e.g. lay coloured fabric to form a rainbow.

Gathering activity

Join hands in a circle around the centrepiece. Play the music of 'Shalom, my friend' and sing the following slightly different words, circling left for the first line and right for the second.

Shalom, my friend, shalom, my friend,
shalom, shalom.

The peace of Christ I give you today,
shalom, shalom.

Gathering prayer

Jesus appeared in the upper room,
peace be with you.

He showed the disciples his hands and his side,

peace be with you.

They were happy that they had seen the Lord,

peace be with you.

Thomas was not there,

peace be with you.

Thomas did not believe,

peace be with you.

Jesus came again for Thomas,

peace be with you.

Thomas believed,

peace be with you.

Amen.

Open the Word

Based on John 20.19-31
Bible notes are on page 40.

With very young children

A chance to explore seeing and believing.

You will need: lidded boxes with different objects inside (e.g. a torch, a toy animal).

Share this short paraphrase and actions.

Jesus died and had risen.
(hold hands up and outwards)

He went to see his friends.
(clasp hands in front as if shaking hands with yourself)

He showed them the scars on his hands
(hold out hands, palm upright)

but Thomas wasn't there. (shake head)
Thomas said: 'I won't believe unless I see and touch Jesus.' (wag finger)

When Jesus came again later he let Thomas touch him.
(touch the palm of one hand with finger from other hand)

Jesus said: 'Happy are those who believe without seeing me.' (smile)

Repeat so the children can join in.

Show the boxes to the children. Tell them what is inside each box, and ask them whether they believe you (e.g. 'there is a wild animal in this box'; 'there is a light in this box'). Reveal the contents of the boxes, and invite them to play with the boxes and objects.

With children

Invite the children to think about what it was like for the disciples after Jesus died. Explain that they were not only sad, but also afraid. They were worried that they might be killed for being a friend of Jesus. They had been hiding in a locked room when something amazing happened. Explain that this story is told from Thomas' point of view.

Talk about

After reading the Bible story to your group, use this discussion point.

- When might you believe in it?

With young people

Ideas to explore the Bible reading are on page 40.

Thomas really believes

based on John 20.19-31

I wasn't with the others at first. I was out and about trying to sort a few things out. If I had been there I would have seen him for myself: his hands, his feet and his side. I would have known that Jesus was alive again! I would have heard him say, 'Peace be with you.'

What a comfort that would have been. I was so confused. I didn't know what to do, where to go or what to believe. I had believed in Jesus and now he was dead.

When I did join them, they were full of the story! How Jesus just appeared in the locked room and greeted them. How he had shown them his wounds. Their grief and fear had been turned to joy! Jesus had renewed their mission and reminded them to forgive; breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'

People say I doubted, but I just didn't believe. I didn't want to. How could I? I had seen his dead body. Jesus alive? Even seeing wouldn't be enough for me.

'I won't believe,' I said, 'unless I touch his wounds myself.' I lived with the story for a very long week. I kept wondering if it could possibly be true. Could Jesus really be alive? Why would my friends make up such a story if it weren't true?

Now, I'm wondering how I could have got things so wrong. I should have known. Jesus appeared again, only this time I was there! I saw him with my own eyes. I heard him with my own ears. 'Peace be with you,' he said.

Then he invited me to touch the wounds in his hands and his side. I wanted to hide with embarrassment, but something kept me going. I did what he said and then looked him in the eye and said, 'My Lord and my God.'

Now, whenever I am tempted to doubt, I remember what he said that day. 'You believe because you see. Happy are those who don't see, but still believe.'



Bible study and response with young people

■ Beforehand, read **John 20.19-31**. Read and print out a copy of the Bible Study sheet for each group member. There are additional Bible notes on the [WEB](#).

■ In the session, read the Bible passage together, and look at the *Bible notes* and *Make connections* sections. Use this conversation spark to provoke first reactions from the group:

In this day and age it is unreasonable to expect people to believe without seeing.

■ For the *Explore* section –

You will need: the track 'I believe in miracles' by the Ramones, and the means to play it.

■ Encourage people to respond to their discussion using the response activity below or the options on the next page.

Respond

Strange but true?

YP 10 MINS

A game of discernment

You will need: pens or pencils and paper.

- Ask everyone to write down a fact about themselves that other people might find difficult to believe. Examples could be: 'my favourite food is cabbage', 'I never wear anything green', or 'Jamie Oliver came to my house for tea'.
- Now ask them to each write down a similar statement that is not true.
- Take it in turns to present both statements and, if appropriate to your group, have a time of questions. Then vote on which statement the group thinks is true.
- Conclude with your turn. Your statements are: 'Jesus is risen and has appeared to us', and 'we will never encounter Jesus again'.
- Discuss reactions to these statements.

Live in faith

Thomas needed to see Jesus. Jesus realised this and visited the disciples a second time.

Encourage the young people to think of someone they know who needs help and to contact them to offer help and support, in person, or by phone, email or text.

My Lord and my God John 20.19-31

Bible notes

The disciples were afraid of the Jews. Although they knew that Jesus had risen, they still did not understand the implications of the resurrection. For some reason Thomas was absent, and so when he is informed of Jesus' visit, he is sceptical. Not only does he need to see Jesus, he needs to touch him. He requires firm evidence that the person he sees is the same person who was crucified. Later, Jesus again appears through a closed door. Thomas proclaims his belief apparently without actually touching Jesus. Thomas goes further than the other disciples, who described Jesus as the Lord. Thomas calls Jesus 'My Lord and my God'. John describes this encounter as a sign (v.30), which is the word he uses for miracle, and his commentary is that Jesus cannot be seen in the same way, but it is important that he is believed in.

Make connections

In this passage Thomas travels from doubt to belief to faith. It was not unreasonable to doubt. It did not make sense that Jesus *should* rise from the dead. What made the difference? Jesus offers Thomas peace, and Thomas realises not only that Jesus is whom they have said, but that he is someone to honour and trust. In what ways can we honour and trust Jesus today? It was in response to a question from Thomas that Jesus said he was the way, the truth and the life (John 14.6). Thomas expressed faith by describing a personal relationship with Jesus, whom he calls 'My Lord and my God'. Thomas now has peace. He has accepted a personal relationship with Jesus based on trust and obedience. Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus? What would it mean to you to say 'My Lord and my God'?

Explore

Think

Think about the important people in your life.

- Why are they important to you?
- Think about those you trust.
- On whom do you rely; whom do you believe?

Ask

- Why do you trust, rely on and believe them?
- What does believing in Jesus mean to you? Is there any difference between belief and faith?
- What do you think John meant by describing actions of Jesus as signs? What sort of thing are they signs of?

Hope

There is a song by the Ramones with the lyric 'I believe in miracles. I believe in a better world for me and you.'

- If Jesus could offer you one thing in the way that he gave Thomas peace, what would you hope for?
- If Jesus could make one difference to the world, what difference would that be?

Pray

Picture what you would like Jesus to bring about for you and for the world, and quietly pray Thomas' words. This is not a magic formula but it is a way of aligning you and your thoughts with those of Jesus.

My Lord and my God.

Respond to the Word

Based on John 20.19-31

See p.39 for ways of presenting the Bible reading.

Watch Messy eaters



A silly way of empathising with someone who feels left out

You will need: two blindfolds, two aprons, two bowls of rather sloppy jelly or mousse, two spoons, two volunteers who don't mind looking silly.

- Put the aprons and blindfolds on the two volunteers. Sit them at a table, where the rest of the group can clearly see them.
- Put the bowls of food and spoons in front of the volunteers and tell them that they are to race each other to see who can eat the food the fastest. Just before saying 'Go', quietly remove the blindfold from one contestant (you could brief them about this beforehand). You could also give the contestant who remains blindfolded a bigger bowl and/or smaller spoon, to help exaggerate the difference.
- When the food is eaten, remove the second blindfold. Let the group tell the person who remained blindfolded what has happened. Invite this volunteer to describe how it feels knowing that they did not see what everyone else did.
- As a group, discuss how Thomas might have felt when the other disciples were talking excitedly about having seen Jesus.

Write A creed



An exploration of belief and faith

You will need: paper and pencils; dictionaries; a thesaurus; examples of creeds, including some for children.

- If your church regularly uses a creed in the service, the children will be familiar with this; if not, explain that the word 'creed' comes from 'credo', a Latin word meaning 'I believe'.
- Invite the group to discuss our beliefs as Christians. Use dictionaries to find definitions and explore the relationship between belief and faith.
- Divide people into small groups and challenge them to write a simple creed – perhaps an acrostic of FAITH or CREDO.

Mime Action replays



Create a sporting analogy to Thomas' experience of the resurrection

You will need: some slips of paper, each with a different sporting scenario written on them, e.g. scoring a rugby try, making a cricket catch, capturing a photo-finish to a race.

- Invite the group to consider how easy it is to miss a piece of the action, especially in sporting events. Talk about how 'action replays' are used to show key events again for those who missed them, and how these are often slowed down to make it easier to see what happened.
- Divide the group into threes or fours, or all work together. Give each small group or individual a sporting scenario, and allow them five minutes to prepare a short mime of it in slow motion.
- Let each small group/individual silently act out their scene, then challenge the others to guess what each mime depicts.
- Suggest to everyone that they could think of today's story as Jesus putting on an action replay for Thomas.

Make OMG T-shirts



Recognising Jesus

You will need: plain t-shirts; fabric pens (you could use ordinary washable marker pens if you want a temporary look); pens and paper.

- Ask the group members what the initials OMG stand for (O my God).
- Talk about whether this might have been something Thomas would have said.
- Claim the phrase as a proclamation of God's glory, not a swear phrase, and invite everyone to create their own OMG t-shirt, emphasising the recognition of God. They should work out their designs on paper before being given a t-shirt.
- Then distribute pens, paper and t-shirts and let them get creative!

Make Pocket encouragers



A take-home reminder of today's message

You will need: scissors; marker pens; craft foam; a hole punch; a 20cm-length of ribbon per person; a few beads each with holes wide enough to thread on to a double thickness of the ribbon.

- Beforehand, cut the foam into parcel label shapes. Punch a single hole at the apex of each label.
- Discuss how events in our lives, or in the news, can cause us all to doubt our faith at times; that God understands this; and that Thomas' story can be an encouragement to us.
- Hand out the foam labels and ask each person to write 'Don't doubt' on one side and 'Believe' on the other using a marker pen. For younger children, write the words out for them to copy, using upper and lowercase letters. Everyone can decorate any remaining space on their label.
- Give everyone a ribbon, instructing them to thread one end of it through the hole in the label, and then bring the two ends together. Let them select two or three beads each and thread both ends of the ribbon through these. Push the beads down to the label, then knot the ribbon ends together to secure the beads on.
- Suggest that they keep their 'encourager' in a coat pocket or tied inside a school bag, to be there for times when they need help to have faith.

Send out

Live in faith

Invite everyone to create a painting, drawing or collage at home of what Jesus' resurrection means to them. You could suggest that they bring their pictures to display in church next week.

Pray

Jesus said, 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet come to believe.'

Thank you, Jesus, that we believe you rose to new life for us.

Amen.