

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

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Chasing Hope: How Ordinary People Make Extraordinary Disciples

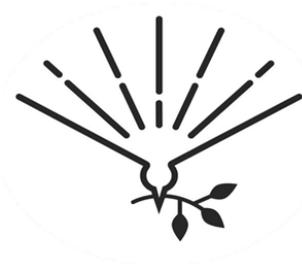
Session 6 - The Skeptic: Thomas and the Unbelieving Father

Day 1 - Faith and Doubt

1. “A faith without some doubts is like a human body without any antibodies in it. People who blithely go through life too busy or indifferent to ask hard questions about why they believe as they do will find themselves defenseless against either the experience of tragedy or the probing questions of a smart skeptic. A person's faith can collapse almost overnight if she has failed over the years to listen patiently to her own doubts, which should only be discarded after long reflection. Believers should acknowledge and wrestle with doubts — not only their own but their friends' and neighbors'. It is no longer sufficient to hold beliefs just because you inherited them. Only if you struggle long and hard with objections to your faith will you be able to provide the grounds for your beliefs to skeptics, including yourself, that are plausible rather than ridiculous or offensive. And, just as important for our current situation, such a process will lead you, even after you come to a position of strong faith, to respect and understand those who doubt.” - Tim Keller.

What stands out to you about Keller's quote?

2. What do you think about the intersection of faith and doubt? Is doubt the enemy of faith or is it the beginning of deeper faith?
3. The opposite of faith isn't doubt, but unbelief. Doubt is a subcategory of faith, and it's a companion on the ride. How do you juxtapose faith and doubt in your life? Are you a person of faith that has been haunted by doubts, or are you a skeptic at heart that has been haunted by faith?



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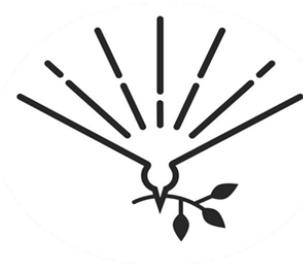
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4. “If a man will **begin with certainties**, he shall end in doubts, but **if he** will be content to **begin** with doubts, **he** shall end in **certainties**.” - Francis Bacon
This quote about the scientific method can also help us with our faith. How can we take this method and use it to deepen our faith?

Day 2 - Intro to Thomas

1. What comes to mind when you hear about the disciple (doubting) Thomas? Do you have a negative or positive view of doubt?
2. Read John 11: 14-16. What was Thomas' Greek name that he was also known as? What does this mean?
3. In verse 16, Thomas reflects not on doubt, but raw devotion and courage. How does this change what you've already heard or known about Thomas?
4. Read John 14: 1-7. Jesus answers Thomas' question with one of the most well known sayings in the Bible. Even though Thomas doesn't understand what Jesus spelled out earlier, he asks a sincere question. What does this tell you about bringing sincere questions to Jesus? Write down some questions about Jesus that you're wrestling with right now.



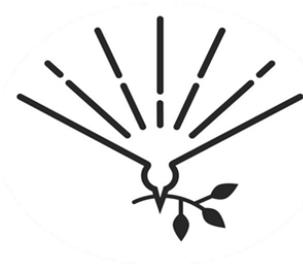
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Day 3 - Thomas continued and The Others Who Doubted

1. Read John 20:19-29. In your own words describe what is happening in this scene.
2. Verse 24 states that Thomas was not with the disciples when Jesus came. How can isolation, especially in times of deep doubt, be so dangerous?
3. Thomas is often pictured as reaching out and touching Jesus' wounds, but we see this isn't the case. What does Thomas exclaim and confess and why is this significant?
4. Read Matthew 28:17. This could also be translated to "they worshiped, but they doubted." What does this tell us about the other disciples?
5. Read Mark 9: 21-24. After questioning Jesus, the boy's father immediately exclaims that he believes, but he needs help to overcome his unbelief. How has experiencing Jesus helped your faith? What areas do you still need help in overcoming unbelief?



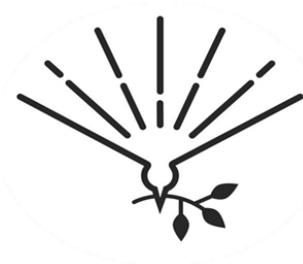
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Day 4 - Reasons to Believe

1. Re-Read John 20:29. How can you believe you in something you haven't seen? What questions naturally arise from what some people call "blind faith?"
2. Hank Hanegraaf is quoted as saying, "Instead of being crushed by a gigantic snowball of questions, let your questions increase your awe for God. If we could figure God out, he'd be a pretty small god." How does that quote resonate with you? How can your questions lead to an increased awe for God?
3. Thomas went from asking sincere questions to making cynical statements. Are you asking questions wanting to draw closer to God, or are you asking questions so you can move away from God? What's the difference?
4. We're not alone in your questions and your doubts. Some of the most prominent men and women in the Bible had questions and doubts; Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Job, Habakkuk, John the Baptist, Thomas, Peter, Paul... How does being in a community of doubters help you overcome unbelief, questions, and doubt?
5. The hope is that our questions and doubt lead to a deeper defense of our faith. How are you actively defending your faith? And what are you defending your faith from?



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Day 5 - Sharing Faith Even When You Doubt

1. Read 1 Peter 3:15. How is it possible to give “an answer to everyone” if you haven’t asked yourself the same questions?
2. Read Matthew 22: 34-37. What does the command mean to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and **MIND**? How can you love God with your mind?
3. We saw earlier that the disciples worshiped Jesus while they doubted. Read Matthew 28:16-20 again. Jesus sends out the disciples to “go and make disciples” and to teach others while they still doubted. How does this encourage you to share your faith and make disciples of all nations?
4. As we’ve read this week, sometimes the greatest doubters become the greatest people of faith. It wasn’t in spite of their doubt, it was because of their doubt. How can you lean into your questions and your doubt in order to follow Jesus and inspire others to do the same?



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Day 6 - Personal Reflection

1. Write your reflections on how faith and doubt intersect in your life. How have you seen doubt and questions help you understand more clearly who you are in Christ?