



LC STUDY GUIDE
Done in Sync with the “unBELIEVEable” Series
The Passage: John 20:21-29
For Life Community usage the week of 4/5/15

Welcome back. Take some time and catch up from your Easter experiences. Invite people to share about their personal celebrations, family gatherings, and what they experienced Easter Sunday.

Intro: Happy Easter! We continue to celebrate the profound truth of Jesus defeating death and having been raised from the dead. As N.T. Wright says, “The message of Easter is that God's new world has been unveiled in Jesus Christ and that you're now invited to belong to it.”

As we continue to deepen our understanding of Jesus and take more steps in following Him, we also continue to process our questions, anxieties, and doubts. There is too much at stake to allow ourselves to have a naïve, simplistic belief—and Jesus does not ask us to do this. Jesus shows Thomas that the rumors are true and that he and all skeptics, seekers, and believers and non-believers of all kinds are invited to believe.

Today's Big Idea: Blessed are those who believe without seeing.

John 20:19-29 (NIV)

19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” **20** After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

21 Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” **22** And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. **25** So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” **27** Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

28 Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

29 Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

What strikes you most about the post-resurrection experiences between Jesus and his disciples?

Other than the central idea of Jesus being raised to life, what other aspects of the Easter story do you find challenging to believe?

Verse 20 describes the disciples as “overjoyed.” Not only are they reunited with their rabbi but they are among the first to see that death has been conquered. What does Jesus say next and how will this shape the next series of events (think book of Acts and the formation of the early church)?

Thomas missed Jesus’ first appearance and thus, must see the risen Lord before he believes. This is understandable as no one (except Lazarus) had ever been raised to life. And sometimes, it’s hard to believe those closest to you who are grieving the loss of their beloved rabbi through such a traumatic series of events. Process out loud what you would be thinking if you were one of the disciples, and like Thomas, missed the first appearance of the risen Jesus.

In what other experiences of your life did you struggle with believing when you could not see? Is there something that you previously believed and now no longer do? Is there something that you used to *not* believe (or were skeptical towards) that you *now* believe?

What have you learned about the nature of disbelief and belief?

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- a. **Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting.** Take some time and select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
 - b. Certain questions work better for certain groups. You are encouraged to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best.
 - c. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
 - d. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
 - e. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
 - f. Application: Pace the study to conclude with “difference making” application.
 - g. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching,” rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.