

ST. THOMAS

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Copies of the downloadable “622 service” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader’s notes - *note fifth page re ice breaker, you may want multiple copies*
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: LEARNING STYLES QUIZ

Distribute copies of the quiz (see page 5) for your teens to complete. Give them a chance to discuss their results with the group. *Have they done proper assessments of their learning styles in the past? What did it tell them about themselves?*

622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order for service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK’S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

DISCUSSION: THE STUFF OF LEARNING

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- Describe a time when a teacher used a method of teaching that really helped you to learn (or didn’t help you at all).
- What do you do if a teacher’s approach isn’t helping you to learn?
- Do you think our learning styles can be related to other strengths and weaknesses that we have?

A few things worth pointing out (if they don’t otherwise arise during the discussion):

- *We all have different preferences; things that help us to learn and things that make it more challenging. Often when we have a favourite class or a favourite teacher it is because the subject and teaching style jives with our own learning style and our own strengths. The same can be true of the reverse. Those of us who struggle with visual learning may have a harder time at geometry or art, and those of us who struggle with hands-on learning may have a harder time in physical education or drama.*
- *Hopefully we don’t give up when our learning style isn’t being addressed! We might consider talking with the teacher to ask whether they can make a few modifications to their lessons or recommend resources that we could look at on our own time. It may take a bit of effort, but it’s usually possible to set up a personal program of study that will fill in the gaps when conditions aren’t in our favour – it means more work, but it pays off in the end.*
- *Our learning styles and our personalities are often connected with certain strengths and weaknesses. As we take a look at Thomas, we’ll see a case in point.*

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THE LESSON: JOHN 20

The first part of the lesson (below) can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

St. Thomas the Apostle was an impulsive man and a bit of a pessimist. As a disciple of Jesus he was what we might call “all in”, but this didn’t stop him from experiencing doubt and asking questions.

On one occasion, as the disciples were travelling, St. Thomas was noted to have said, “Let us also go, that we may die with him” (John 11:16). When it came to the arrest and crucifixion of his Lord, however, St. Thomas ran away with the others. On another occasion, when Jesus had begun to explain that he would be going away to prepare a place for his followers, St. Thomas was the one who piped up and said, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” (John 14:5). The most famous record we have of St. Thomas, however, is the one we’ll look at today – the one that earned him the nickname “Doubting Thomas”.

As we read the text, keep in mind that after this encounter happened, St. Thomas went on to preach the Gospel in Asia, and is believed to have been martyred by the thrust of a spear in India. Those of us who share some of St. Thomas’ less admirable qualities can be encouraged by the patient grace that Jesus extended to him, and the example that St. Thomas went on to set for us in faith and devotion.

Refer to John 20: 24-29.

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS’ NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they’ve just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- Why do you think St. Thomas responded to the testimony of the other disciples the way he did?
- What does this encounter tell us about Jesus?
- How can this story help or encourage us today?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *St. Thomas had been dedicated to the cause of Christ. He was a disciple. He had listened to the teaching, witnessed the miracles, and hoped for greater things to come. But then, like the others, he had suffered a great shock. His Lord had been arrested and killed. His hopes had been dashed. He was not going to allow his hope to be rekindled so easily. Most of us can probably relate to this! St. Thomas needed to be sure. We might even speculate that St. Thomas was someone for whom hearing and even seeing was not enough: he needed to place his hand on hard evidence in order to be convinced. Though St. Thomas has been criticized for his doubt, many later Christians have “thanked him for his skepticism. This was the occasion for reassuring future generations of believers by his confession of Christ’s Divinity” (Oxford Dictionary of Saints).*
- *The first thing it tells us is that Jesus did not give up on St. Thomas simply because hearing had not been enough for him. That one disciple mattered enough to Jesus for him to appear again. Notice what his words of greeting are: “Peace be with you”. St. Thomas was in a state of distress and doubt, but Jesus greeted him in peace. Jesus knew the questions that St. Thomas had, and Jesus was willing to undergo the indignity of having his wounds examined so that this one disciple’s faith and hope might be restored. But Jesus didn’t stop there. Jesus knew that many generations of believers would follow who would not have the advantage of doing as St. Thomas had done. So in that moment he acknowledged us and blessed us.*

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- *The saints and heroes of scripture are an encouragement to us because they share our weaknesses and failings. St. Thomas was impulsive, pessimistic, and doubtful, but Jesus did not give up on him. Moreover, his encounter with the risen Lord emboldened St. Thomas to become a missionary and martyr. No matter what our struggles, we may be sure that they are not too challenging for God to overcome, and if we let him, he can use us to build his kingdom.*

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON'T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU'LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY "AT-HOME CHALLENGE" IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE "FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES", WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

In what ways do you identify with St. Thomas? What are your own weaknesses, doubts and struggles? Bring those things to God, and ask him to help you overcome them. Say, in the words of the disciples, "Increase my faith!" (Luke 17:5) Next, give some thought to how your doubt or faith may affect your witness to others. Ask God to make you always "prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15).

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through the following collect.

Almighty and everliving God, who for the more confirmation of the faith didst suffer thy holy Apostle Thomas to be doubtful in thy Son's resurrection: Grant us so perfectly, and without all doubt, to believe in thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in thy sight may never be reproved. Hear us, O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

(COLLECT FOR THE FEAST OF ST THOMAS THE APOSTLE, P. 262)

CLOSING PRAYERS (622 AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE "PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS" SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU'RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the "Grace", the final prayer in the booklet.

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JOHN 20: **FROM DOUBT TO DEVOTION**

²⁴Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

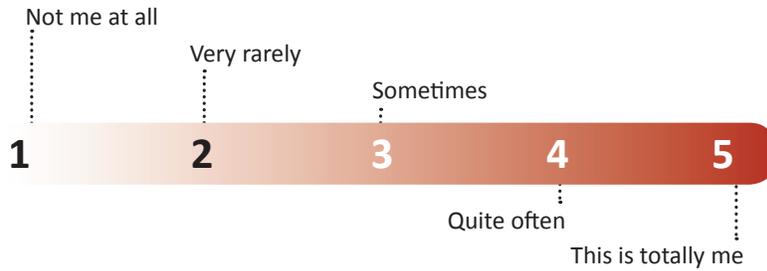
²⁶Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”

²⁸Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

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LEARNING STYLES QUIZ

Give yourself a score for the following statements based on the key below.



1. When trying to remember how to spell a word, I need to write it down.
2. I like to colour-code things to help me remember them.
3. I am easily distracted by movement, such as people walking by while I'm working.

VISUAL LEARNING TOTAL: _____

1. If I need to remember something, I like to make up a little song about it.
2. I would rather have something read to me than read it myself.
3. I find it very distracting if there's noise or music while I'm trying to concentrate.

AUDITORY LEARNING TOTAL: _____

1. When I need to explain something, I talk using my hands.
2. I'd rather fix or assemble something by trial-and-error than read a manual.
3. Sitting still for a long time, just listening or watching, is hard for me.

HANDS-ON LEARNING TOTAL: _____

1. I enjoy class discussions and debates.
2. If I cannot find what I'm looking for I'm quick to ask someone for directions.
3. I can usually remember something if I studied it with a friend.

SOCIAL LEARNING TOTAL: _____

1. I have a hard time concentrating on my studies if there are other people around.
2. The best way for me to understand something is to figure it out by myself.
3. Given the choice, I'd rather have do an individual assignment than a group one.

SOLITARY LEARNING TOTAL: _____

Note: This is a just-for-fun quiz, referencing a variety of learning style theories, and not intended as a formal assessment tool.