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## Thomas

*Disciple of Doubt***John 14:1-7; 20:19-31**

It descended one day like a dark cloud. The niggling questions that had pricked at the back of my mind for months suddenly clumped into one large doubt. Maybe Jesus didn't really rise from the dead. Maybe it was all a skillful hoax. Maybe I, along with the other deluded Christians, was one whom the apostle Paul had described as "to be pitied more than all men" (1 Corinthians 15:19). I prayed. I read the Scriptures. I read commentaries about the resurrection. I talked with believing friends. One respected friend laughed her own form of disbelief at me. "No Christian of three decades' standing could seriously ask such questions." Still, for a time, I doubted.

**GROUP DISCUSSION.** What would you say or do if a close friend were encountering serious doubts about the Christian faith?

**PERSONAL REFLECTION.** When doubts about Christianity come to you, what form do they take? Make some jotted notes of these questions. Where and how have you found answers to some? What questions still trouble you?

Christ's followers had been with him for three years. Though they didn't know it, his death was a mere day away. John 14 begins Christ's last major recorded conversation with his disciples. *Read John 14:1-7.*

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1. What all could the disciples know, from these words, about Christ's future and their own (vv. 1-4)?

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2. What value did Thomas's question have for himself and the others who heard Christ's words (vv. 5-7)?

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3. What difference does it make that Jesus said, "I *am* the way and the truth and the life" (v. 6), instead of "I *know*" or "I *taught you* the way and the truth and the life"?

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4. Which words here comfort you? Explain.

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5. Jesus died (as he said he would) and was buried on Friday. John 20

records what happened on Sunday and beyond. *Read John 20:19-31.* What did Thomas miss by not being present with the rest of the disciples on Sunday night (vv. 19-23)?

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6. In view of the differences between what the other ten disciples had experienced and what Thomas had experienced, how do you think Thomas and the ten differed in the way they spent their next week?

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7. How did Jesus deal with Thomas's doubts (vv. 26-29)?

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8. What internal changes had to take place for Thomas to say the words of verse 28?

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9. How might a period of doubt, such as Thomas experienced, have a long-term positive effect?

10. What promises about seeing and believing do you find in verses 29-31?

Which of these do you most need to make a part of your faith experience and why?

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11. John 20:31 says that "by believing you may have life in his name." How has belief in Christ's death and resurrection given you life?

*Pray, giving an honest expression of your doubts but also expressing your desire for deepened faith. If you are able to do so with honesty, open and close your prayer with Thomas's statement of faith: "My Lord and my God."*

### **Now or Later**

Jesus invited Thomas to touch his wounds in order to verify that he was indeed crucified, dead, and now alive again. Pick one area of Christianity that challenges your faith. In the coming days, make serious effort, through research or conversation with Christians you respect, to confront that question and find a solution that deepens your faith.