

HIT RESET

By Believing You May Have Life

INTRODUCTION

John 20:24-31

Years ago the British agnostic Thomas Huxley had to leave early one morning to go from one speaking assignment to another, so he got into a horse-drawn taxi to go from his hotel to the train station. He assumed that the hotel doorman had told the driver of the carriage that they were to go to the train station. So when he got in, he simply said to the driver, "Drive fast."

Off they went. After a short while, Huxley, who was familiar with the area, realized that they were actually going in the opposite direction from the train station. He yelled to the driver, "Do you know where you're going?" Without looking back, the driver replied, "No, sir, but I'm driving very fast."

Obviously, it doesn't do much good to go fast if you're going in the wrong direction! Yet, many people, even Christians, are like that. They're going full speed, but they haven't stopped to evaluate where they ought to be going. Before you know it, life has whizzed by, but you haven't spent it aimed in the right direction. As Christians, we all would agree that to live properly, we must live in line with God's purpose.

Our text brings us to John's purpose statement for writing his gospel. First, he illustrates his purpose with the story of Thomas having his doubts cleared up as he sees the risen Lord Jesus Christ and exclaims (John 20:28), "My Lord and my God!" Then John states his purpose plainly (John 20:30-31): "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." To sum up:

The aim of the gospel is that we would believe in and worship the risen Savior.

Thomas moved from doubting Jesus' resurrection to believing in and worshiping Him as his risen Lord and God. John wants all his readers to come to that same point of belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and God. Or, to put it another way, John wants us to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, so that we may have life in His name. All who have life through believing in Jesus' name worship Him as Lord and God. But to come to that place, we have to join Thomas in overcoming the enemy of faith called "doubt."¹

Prefer to type your answers?

This study allows you to do that. Just make sure that you save the PDF to your device and open it in Acrobat Reader or a similar PDF program. If you open the study guide in your web browser (Chrome, Safari, Edge) you probably won't be able to save your answers!

¹ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-103-aim-gospel-john-2024-31>

OPEN IT

1. What's the most unbelievable story you've ever heard, whether from a child, a jokester friend, or someone you trust? Did it turn out to be true?

READ IT

John 20:24-31

EXPLORE IT

2. What is Thomas' response when the other disciples say they've seen Jesus?
3. What happened while the disciples were in a locked room?
4. What physical evidence does Jesus offer to Thomas?
5. What does Thomas say after seeing the risen Christ?
6. What was John's purpose for writing down his gospel account and the miracles?
7. What does John say we will have by believing?

APPLY IT

“I will never believe.”

We all struggle at times with varying degrees of doubts, which cloud our faith in the risen Savior. Thomas, though, has the distinction of being “doubter-in-chief”—everyone knows him as, “Doubting Thomas.” That may not be entirely fair, in that Luke 24:11 tells us that when the women first brought reports of Jesus’ resurrection, none of the apostles believed them. But Thomas’ persistent doubts put him at the head of the pack.

There are different kinds of doubters. Some use their doubts as a cover so they can go on sinning. They smugly say that they’re being “intellectually honest” or they “can’t put their brains on the shelf.” But they aren’t interested in getting those doubts cleared up, because they don’t want to submit to Jesus as Lord. Doubting gives them an aura of intellectual honesty, but when you peel away the veneer, their doubts really serve only as a cover-up for their sins.²

8. Before Thomas interacted with the risen Savior, how did the other disciples bear witness to Christ’s resurrection? As one of the first examples of evangelism, how was the good news received?

9. Doubts are nothing new to followers of Jesus growing in their walk with Him. What are some doubts about Jesus you have had over the years? How have you sought the truth in those areas?

10. Thomas refused to believe Jesus’ resurrection unless he could see and touch the physical evidence. How is physical evidence helpful to our faith? How is it possible for us to have genuine faith without the physical presence of Jesus?

² Ibid.

“Do not disbelieve, but believe.”

Very simply, they were not expecting a resurrection. Now it’s true that Jesus had predicted that he would be put to death and then raised to life. But his followers did not understand it. A resurrection was the farthest thing from their minds. Forget his predictions. Forget all that brave talk. They had given up. Who really expected a resurrection on that Sunday morning? Not the disciples. It was the Jewish leaders who persuaded the Romans to seal the tomb. The enemies of Jesus feared something might happen. His friends weren’t expecting anything.

Mark 16 says that the women who came to his tomb on Sunday morning came to anoint his body. That was part of the embalming process. In the confusion of trying to get the body in the tomb before sundown on Friday, spices had been placed on Jesus’ body, but not the ointment. The women came to finish embalming his body. What did they find when they got there? The stone rolled away and an empty tomb. All four gospels agree on this fact. The women did not have the slightest idea what had happened. They weren’t looking for a resurrection.³

11. The resurrection of Christ overcame physical, spiritual, and medical laws and stands as the greatest miracle of all time. What does this miracle say to you about the power of Jesus?

12. After His resurrection, Jesus returned in victory to His group of hand-picked disciples. What does the miracle of the resurrection say to you about the love of Jesus?

13. How can we remember the importance of the resurrection this week?

³ <http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/the-apostle-who-would-not-believe-christ-speaks-to-the-problem-of-broken-dreams/>

“My Lord and My God!”

Jesus responded to Thomas's unbelief with grace. He gave the struggling disciple the opportunity to do exactly what he had wanted: to touch the wounds of his risen Savior. Then Thomas made a profound confession: "my Lord and my God!" He acknowledged Jesus's deity. As John says at the beginning of his gospel, "the Word was God."

John tells his readers that the things he has written down in his Gospel are merely the highlights! Nevertheless, "these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. Here John gives us the evangelistic purpose for his book. He wrote it "so that" readers might believe that Jesus is the Messiah—the God-man—who died as a substitutionary atonement for sins and that, by believing, they will receive eternal life—that is, an eternal relationship with God and an ever-expanding experience of his reality in our lives. That's what salvation is all about.⁴

14. Thomas called out in worship when he finally believed Jesus rose from the grave. What's one worship song you love to sing regarding the truth that Jesus is alive?

15. Jesus tells us that Christians today are blessed because we "...have not seen and yet have believed." How do 1 Peter 1:8-9 and 2 Corinthians 5:7 confirm the blessings we experience even though we haven't seen Jesus?

16. Jesus tells his disciples three times, "Peace be with you" (John 20:19, 21, 26). How does Jesus give you peace in your life?

⁴ Evans, Tony, and Holman, CSB Bibles by. The Tony Evans Bible Commentary. United States, B&H Publishing Group, 2019.

“Believe that Jesus is the Christ”

John could not be more straightforward about his reasons for writing this book. He wants his readers—he wants us—to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the King, the Son of God, the Suffering Servant. He wants us to have eternal life through the work Jesus has done on our behalf. To read a book like this is to be brought to a point of stark decision. Do we believe in Jesus or not? Do we believe he is who he claims to be? Do we believe he died as a sacrifice so that sinners might be forgiven of their sin? Do we believe he rose from the dead? These are questions we cannot simply ignore or avoid. Why? Because to ignore the question is to answer it—it is to admit that we do not really believe this; it is to admit that, despite everything we now know of Jesus, we think it is safe to turn away and do nothing.

But, of course, John will have none of that. We have read his book. Now we must answer his question: Do we believe or not?⁵

17. What was it like for you when you finally made the decision to turn to Jesus in faith and repentance? What was God doing in your heart when you first believed?

18. As we seek to imitate John and bring the truth of Jesus before others, write the names of five people to whom you will ask God to grant saving faith. Share those names with your group and take turns praying for those people by name.

⁵ ESV Story of Redemption Bible: A Journey Through the Unfolding Promises of God. N.p., Crossway Books, 2018.

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