

# REACH OUT YOUR HAND

## JOHN 20:19-29

(Prepared by Gene Thompson using LifeWay's ETB materials.)

1. What is the most unbelievable thing you have ever seen?

The truth is that it is hard to find something today that shocks people. Unbelievable things are made known around the world in a matter of seconds today. We've almost come to expect the unbelievable daily. There have even been reports of people being found alive in the morgue as they were being prepared for burial. But to find someone alive after three days in the tomb is quite different. Following Jesus' resurrection, His closest followers had questions that defied answers until they saw the evidence with their own eyes. Would we be any different?

2. How does a person gain credibility to the point that they can share something implausible and still be believed? (What is this person's history of truth telling? How committed is the person to the truth of what is told? Are you willing to die for it?)

3. How do you think the disciples felt in the aftermath of the resurrection? (They were challenged to believe something that was beyond belief.)

To one degree or another we can probably appreciate some level of skepticism because we live in a skeptical world, especially when it comes to Christianity. In our study today we will look at the doubts that people had about Jesus' resurrection, particularly Thomas's demand for hard evidence of a supernatural reality. As you dig into his story, confront your own doubts, and ask God to help you resolve them.

4. Why was it so important for Jesus' followers to embrace His resurrection? (Read 1 Cor. 15:12-19.) As we look at the disciples' reactions, we will probably see a reflection of ourselves. We all have doubts and struggles, but the words we hear from Jesus can help us navigate those questions.

### COMMISSIONED! Read John 20:19-23

#### Remember as we study this passage the best interpretation of Scripture is other Scripture!

1. What are some unique things about Jesus' appearance here? (Jesus simply appeared; He didn't come through a door. He greeted them in "peace" to calm them. He showed His wounds without being asked. He already knew they had doubts. In Luke 24:36-43 he records that the disciple's thought Jesus was a ghost and He ate some fish to prove to them who He was.)

2. What was the significance of the locked doors? (The disciples were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Jesus came into the room without opening the doors. His glorified body was not subject to the limitations of time and space as He was prior to His resurrection.)

The other disciples had heard the reports of Peter and John but now they see for themselves.

3. What were the disciples commissioned to do? (Take the message of the resurrected Lord to the world.)

They were not to go back to life as it was before they answered Jesus' call on their lives. They now had a mission!

Read John 20:22. We know that the Holy Spirit came in full power in the lives of the 120 gathered in the upper room on Pentecost. The best interpretation of this verse is that they received a partial filling at this time. He gave them a preview of the Holy Spirit's arrival. He also affirmed His divinity by echoing what the Father had done through creation centuries earlier—Gen. 2:7

4. Did Jesus give the disciples the authority to forgive sin? (NO! We know from other Scripture that only God can forgive sin.)

The best interpretation of this verse comes from *GotQuestions.org*. "As they (the disciples) proclaimed the gospel, they could honestly tell people who believed in that message that their sins were forgiven, and they could honestly tell people that did not believe in the message that their sins were not forgiven and

that they stand condemned in God's eyes. 'Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.' John 3:36"

5. How does the joy of knowing Jesus is resurrected motivate believers to tell others about Him? (To see others experience that joy increases our joy as we are obedient to our Lord.)

While Jesus' appearance was great for the disciples who were there, one disciple missed the reunion.

### **DEMANDS! Read John 20:24-25**

1. Why do you think Thomas had such a hard time believing the other disciple's report? (Thomas may have said, "I saw what they did to Jesus and watched from a distance as He died on the cross, I saw them take His body and place it in the tomb. He's dead. Listen to what you are saying! There is no way He's alive.)

Thomas often gets criticized because of his doubts, but he could also be very loyal to Jesus. See John 11:16. Also remember when Jesus entered the room the night Thomas wasn't there, the first thing Jesus did was to show them His scars.

2. What evidence did Thomas demand? (He demanded to see and touch Jesus' scars for himself.)

3. What evidence might a person today demand prior to believing in Jesus? (The best evidence is the changed life of a believer!)

4. What kind of barriers keeps people today from putting their faith in Jesus? (Sadly, some professed Christian's life. Some say, "I'll do it later; I want to just have fun now." Don't want to change the life they are living. Why doesn't God stop all the suffering in the world?)

John Ortberg: "I do not know why tragedy, which destroys faith in some people, gives birth to it in others. Suffering both raises unanswerable questions and tells us that our only hope must be a hope beyond ourselves."

5. How can we most effectively deal with honest doubts? (Prayer; Scripture reading; Talk with a trusted Christian leader or friend; etc)

**If Jesus is truly risen, then that one act of God demanded the rest of Thomas' life as well as yours and mine!**

### **BELIEVED! Read John 20:26-29**

Note that Jesus greeted them just as He had the week before.

1. How did Jesus respond to Thomas? (Jesus invited him to do the very thing he demanded!)

2. How does Jesus address our doubts about Him today? (Jesus often meets us right where we are, even in our doubts. But He doesn't expect us to stay where we are, He expects us to grow in Him spiritually!)

3. What does this passage tell us about those who believe without seeing? (They, uh, we are blessed!)

4. Does having strong faith mean I never have any doubts? (No. Martin Luther, the champion of justification by faith, was approached for help by an elderly woman troubled by doubt. "Tell me, "He asked her, "when you recite the creeds—do you believe them?" "Yes, most certainly." "Then go in peace," the reformer said. "You believe more and better than I do.")

**As we work through our doubts we grow in our faith!**

### **SUMMARY AND CHALLENGE!**

1. What should we do when we encounter doubts of others? (Listen, pray, show kindness and respect, emphasize God's love, etc.)

2. To what degree are you certain you have a saving belief in Jesus?

3. If you have sincere questions about your answer, talk with a trusted friend or one of our pastors.

Pray thanking God that we can know for sure that Jesus is alive and that we are saved!