

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

John 20:24-29

²⁴One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. ²⁵They told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he replied, 'I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.' ²⁶Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. 'Peace be with you,' he said. ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!' ²⁸'My Lord and my God!' Thomas exclaimed. ²⁹Then Jesus told him, 'You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.'

:: Jesus is not REPELLED by our doubt.

John 14:5

'No, we don't know, Lord,' Thomas said. 'We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?'

:: God can turn a roadblock of doubt into an AVENUE of understanding and belief.

Psalms 22:1; 30b-31

¹My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why are you so far away when I groan for help?

^{30b}Future generations will hear about the wonders of the Lord. ³¹His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born. They will hear about everything he has done.

How to receive forgiveness from God:

- 1) Admit you, like everyone else, need new LIFE in Jesus.
- 2) Ask God to forgive your sins by the sacrifice of Jesus.
- 3) Receive new LIFE from God by trusting in Jesus as your Savior & Lord.

You can do that now by simply talking to God in a prayer like this:

Dear Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. Today, I receive you as my Savior; and I put my faith in you as my LORD. Help me to live for you all the days of my life. In Your name, Amen.

If you chose to follow Jesus today, text “LIFE” to 309-250-2007 to receive additional information about next steps in following Jesus.

For Further Reflection:

:: Read/Re-read John 20:24-29

:: What stands out to you as you reflect on this encounter?

:: What do you find most interesting about what Jesus did/didn't do?

:: Reflect upon a time when you struggled with a doubt in your faith journey.

:: How did God interact with you in the midst of that doubt?

:: Do your faith community play a role in helping you in your doubt?

:: Pastor Josh mentioned that God is not repelled by our doubt:

:: Have you found this to be true? Do you have a story to share?

:: Have you ever been made to feel that having a doubt is wrong?

:: What lessons does Thomas' story teach us about approaching God with our doubt?

:: Read/Re-read Psalm 22

:: What stands out to you as you read the entirety of the Psalm?

:: Can you think of any other scriptural examples of when God helped remove an obstacle of doubt and create an avenue of belief?

:: Pastor Josh mentioned the decision Thomas made to remain connected to community.

:: What are some of the benefits of staying connected to spiritual community, particularly in the midst of times of doubt?

Unless otherwise noted, today's Scripture is from the New Living Translation [NLT].

Josh Howard (@joshhoward77) – April 17 & 18, 2021

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