

SESSION 2

YOU'LL NEVER DIE

▶ **The Point**

The resurrection of Jesus makes our own resurrection possible.

▶ **The Passage**

John 11:25-27; 20:24-29

▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

Oh, the things we will do to live longer! We all know that a healthy diet and exercise improve our bodies and, therefore, help us live longer. Beyond that, though, researchers have discovered a few more things that might increase your life span

Live on top of a mountain. People who live at high altitudes live longer.

Learn a new language. Being able to speak multiple languages slows the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's.

Live on a reduced-calorie diet. One of the longest-living people groups limits their daily intake to 1,200 calories.

Work harder. Serious and persistent workers tend to live longer than the carefree employee.⁴

You could try all these, and while you *might* increase your life span, you can be sure of one thing: *you're still going to die.* Jesus told us the only way not to die is to believe in and follow Him. And He made that possible when He died on the cross and rose from the dead.

▶ **The Setting**

Two conversations provide priceless insight into the significance of Jesus' resurrection and its relationship to the resurrection of His followers. After the death of Lazarus, his sister Martha rebuked Jesus for not being present to save her brother. Jesus revealed to her that He is the source of eternal life. A week after His resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples. In His conversation with Thomas, Jesus blessed those who put their faith in Him.

What does the Bible say?

John 11:25-27; 20:24-29

11:25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,

26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

27 She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

20:24 Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.

25 So 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.”

26 Eight 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.”

28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

29 Jesus 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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Notes

John 11:25-27

25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” 27 She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud John 11:25-27 on page 79 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use the Commentary for the verses on the next page of this Leader Guide to share some of the background for the conversation between Jesus and Martha.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 79 of the PSG: **“How would you describe Jesus’ claims in these verses?”**

RECAP: Resurrection from death and the promise of eternal life are so closely related to Jesus that we can only find them in a relationship with Him. That relationship begins with believing. Jesus went on to say, “Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” This great truth of Jesus as the resurrection calls for a response. Jesus asked Martha, “Do you believe this?” She affirmed her belief and trust in Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.” She had seen His miracles and heard Him teach; now she came to the only conclusion: Jesus is the Messiah.

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In advance, enlist a volunteer to share their testimony of salvation with the group. Ask them to tie their testimony to the theme of resurrection if possible.

TRANSITION: Jesus promised that those who believe in Him will never die. But in the next verses, we see that resurrection can be difficult to accept as reality.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

What does it mean to believe in Jesus?

John 11:25-27 Commentary

[Verses 25-26] In His conversation with Martha after the death of her brother, Lazarus, Jesus promised that those who believe in Him will never die. When Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus that their brother, Lazarus, was sick, their message clearly implied that they expected Jesus to come immediately to Bethany (about two miles southeast of Jerusalem) and heal him. However, Jesus remained where He was for two more days before setting out for Bethany (John 11:6-7).

By the time Jesus neared Bethany, Lazarus had been buried in a tomb for four days. When Lazarus's sister Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet Him. (See vv. 17-20.) When she came to Jesus, Martha told Him: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you" (vv. 21-22). Martha believed that Jesus was God's Messiah, the Christ; she knew He had the power to heal the sick.

Jesus offered Martha comfort by assuring her that her brother would rise again. (See v. 23.) Martha took His words to mean that Lazarus would rise in the resurrection of the righteous at the end of the age. (See Dan. 7:9-18; Luke 14:14.) Jesus told her that He is **the resurrection and the life**, the only source of eternal life (See John 1:4; 5:25-29; 1 John 5:11-12.) Those who put their faith in Jesus as God's Son and His atoning sacrifice for sin (see 1 John 4:9-10) will **live**.

Jesus then told Martha, **"Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die."** However, Jesus was not saying that those who believed in Him would never face physical death. Those who place their faith in Jesus experience new life in both this age and the age to come. They will be able to experience a new quality of life here and now that is free of the guilt of and slavery to sin. (See Rom. 6:6-7; 8:1-11; 2 Cor. 5:17.) Although believers are still subject to pain, sickness, and even physical death, which are the realities of living in this fallen world, when believers die we go to live in the presence of the Lord in heaven. Furthermore, at the end of this age when Jesus returns, this world will pass away, giving way to a new heaven and new earth. (See Rev. 21:1-2.) The Book of Revelation provides details of this future event (vv. 3-4). For those who refuse to believe in Jesus, they face what Scripture terms "the second death," eternal separation from God in the place known as hell, "the lake of fire." (See 20:11-15.)

At that future time, believers in Christ will experience the full reality of what Jesus told Martha. To ensure that Martha's belief was more than merely intellectual agreement, Jesus challenged her to confirm her absolute trust: **"Do you believe this?"**

[Verse 27] Martha called Jesus **Lord**, His title of authority (See Luke 6:46.) and stated, **"I believe."** She confessed that Jesus is **"the Christ,"** the Messiah, the Anointed One sent by God to reveal the Father. (See John 1:18.) And, finally, she called Jesus **"the Son of God, who is coming into the world,"** affirming His oneness with God the Father and His role as the Savior of the world. (See John 1:1-18; 3:31; 6:14; 1 John 4:14-15.)



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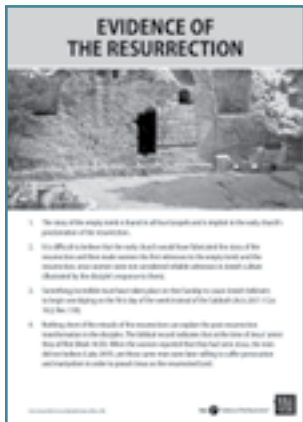
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ALTERNATE QUESTION:

When doubt sets in, how do you tend to overcome it?

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John 20:24-25

24 Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. **25** So 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."

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud John 20:24-25 on page 80 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 80 of the PSG: "What obstacles often hinder people from believing in Jesus?"

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity, "The Hope of the Resurrection" on page 81 of the PSG to help them understand the significance of the resurrection.



Draw some symbols or write some expressions that best represent resurrection to you. You can also create a word cloud that describes resurrection. Then answer the questions.

RECAP: It's hard to believe without seeing. It's far easier to believe when evidence and proof are right in front of us. The Christian life is one of faith, but that faith has to be grounded in something solid. Otherwise, it's just blind faith, something we hope might be true. Faith is only as good as its foundation.

LEADER PACK: Refer to **Pack Item 7**, the "Evidence of the Resurrection" handout. Divide group members into subgroups of three to four members each and ask group members to read and discuss the handout. After several minutes, invite volunteers to share their observations with the larger group. **Ask:** "What did you find most interesting on this handout?" Follow up by **asking:** "Which piece of evidence do you find most remarkable?"

TRANSITION: In the next verses, we see that Jesus backed up His promise of eternal life by rising from the dead.

John 20:24-25 Commentary

[Verse 24] The reality of Jesus' resurrection can be difficult for some to accept. On the Sunday evening of the day of Jesus' resurrection, the disciples were gathered in a room with the doors locked because they feared the Jews. (See John 20:19.) Despite the locked doors, Jesus was able to come into the room. He greeted His disciples with the words, "Peace be with you" (v. 19). After this, Jesus showed His disciples His hands and side. The disciples rejoiced that their Lord was risen. (See v. 20.)

However, for some reason which is not explained, **Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin**, was not present when the Lord appeared to His disciples. ("Thomas" is Aramaic for "twin.")

[Verse 25] After seeing Jesus for themselves, the other disciples later told Thomas about their experience. The Greek term for **told him** that they had seen the Lord may suggest that they kept telling him what they had experienced. Thomas was clearly reluctant to believe what the other disciples were reporting to him. He told the disciples, **"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."**

Through the years some Christians have referred to Thomas as "doubting Thomas." They do this because at first Thomas refused to believe that Jesus was really alive since he had not seen Jesus for himself. He adamantly said that he would not believe that Jesus had been resurrected until he, like the other ten (see v. 20), had the opportunity to see (and in his case touch) the indentations where the nails had held Jesus' hands to the cross and the spot where the spear had pierced His side. (See 19:31-34.)

Thomas was one of the twelve disciples (also called apostles) chosen by Jesus to be His constant followers. (See Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:14-19; Luke 6:13-16.) When Jesus called on His disciples to return to Judea with Him after receiving the message about Lazarus's illness (see John 11:1-16), the disciples had tried to persuade Him not to go because the Jews wanted to kill Him. (See v. 8.) However, Thomas was the one who boldly spoke up and challenged the others to return with Jesus, even if they would have to die with Him. (See v. 16.)

In the hours before Jesus was arrested, He encouraged His apostles to keep trusting in Him and His Father. (See 14:1.) When Jesus told them that He was going away and that they knew "the way" (v. 4), Thomas quickly spoke up both for himself and the other apostles, telling Jesus they *didn't* know where Jesus was going or the way to get there. (See v. 5.) Clearly, Thomas *wanted* to know the way to follow Jesus wherever He was going. Thomas's question led to Jesus' declaration that He is in fact the only way to the Father and that when one sees Jesus, one has seen the Father. (See vv. 6-7.)

According to the Gospel accounts, Thomas was always ready to follow Jesus. Thomas was not afraid to follow Jesus. He, like the rest of the apostles (see Luke 24:11; John 20:20), simply wanted to be certain that it was truly Jesus who was leading the way.



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John 20:26-29

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

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud John 20:26-29 on page 82 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use the Commentary for the verses on the next page of this Leader Guide to share the three aspects of true faith.

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 83 of the PSG: **"What do you find encouraging about Jesus' appearance to Thomas?"**

RECAP: So why do we believe? We trust the words and witness of those who did see Jesus alive. Disciples like Thomas. Paul underscored the witness of those who saw Jesus.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

Why is the resurrection such an essential part of the gospel?

We don't simply believe the resurrection of Jesus happened, but it is an event that we can trust to be life-changing. Jesus IS the resurrection, and life only comes through Him. If you want eternal life, trust the truth of the resurrection, follow the words of Jesus, and believe.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 83 of the PSG: **"How can our group make clear our belief in Jesus as Lord and God?"**

GUIDE: Refer back to **"The Point"** for this session: **"The resurrection of Jesus makes our own resurrection possible."**

LEADER PACK: Display **Pack Item 8**, "Responding to the Gospel" poster, and use it to highlight what it means to trust Jesus for salvation.



John 20:26-29 Commentary

[Verse 26] Jesus' resurrection backs up His promise that those who believe in Him will have eternal life. Eight days after His appearance to His followers on the day of His resurrection, Jesus joined them again, probably in the same house. Although **the doors were locked** as they had been before, through His divine power Jesus was able to come into the room where **His disciples** had gathered. This time Thomas was present with the other ten apostles. John used the same wording as in verse 19 to describe Jesus' arrival: **Jesus came and stood among them**. As before, He spoke the familiar Jewish greeting, **"Peace be with you,"** to reassure them after His sudden appearance despite the locked doors.

[Verse 27] Thomas had said he would not believe unless he saw the risen Jesus for himself. Now, Jesus invited Thomas not only to view His wounds, but to touch them: **"Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."** Jesus urged Thomas to put away all his doubts and believe.

[Verse 28] Thomas responded to Jesus with a confession of faith which demonstrated three aspects of true faith. First, true faith must be personal faith. Thomas confessed Jesus to be **"My Lord and my God!"** (emphasis added). Thomas no longer had any doubts. (See John 18:34; Rom. 10:9-13).

Second, true faith affirms that Jesus is **God**. Jesus is the incarnate Son of God. (See John 1:1,14.) True followers of Jesus confess that He is God Incarnate. (See Matt. 16:13-20; 1 John 4:2-3.)

Third, true faith affirms that Jesus is **Lord**. True believers acknowledge that Jesus is Lord over their lives. True faith always results in obedience to Jesus' commands. (See Rom 1:5-6; Jas. 2:14-26.) Only those whose faith yields the fruit of obedience to the Lord's will are truly believers (See Matt. 7:13-27.)

[Verse 29] Being able to see the risen Jesus for himself had erased all of Thomas's doubts that Jesus was truly alive. Jesus pointed out that Thomas believed because he had seen Him and the scars from His crucifixion. Of course, this was true for all of the first disciples. All of them had been downcast after the death of Jesus, bewildered and fearful. But fear and doubt were transformed into faith. They all believed for the same reason (see 1 Cor. 15:3-8); they had seen the risen Lord. (See Luke 24:13-48.)

While Jesus affirmed Thomas for believing, He went on to pronounce a blessing on those who would later believe *without* having seen Him. How did people who had never seen Jesus after His resurrection come to put their faith in Him? They believed because those who had seen Jesus after His resurrection shared the good news of the gospel.

Thomas received a great blessing in that he was allowed to see Jesus for himself and because he responded with his confession of faith. Those of us who have believed without having seen Jesus are also blessed because we share the same faith and confession with Thomas and Martha. We know in our hearts that not only is Jesus risen from the dead but that He is also the resurrection and the life for all who believe in Him. (See John 11:25-26.)



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 84 of the PSG. Encourage them to choose one of the following applications to carry out this week:



Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

- ▶ **Believe.** Jesus is alive, and He invites you to follow Him. If you have never trusted in Christ, place your full faith in Him. Read the inside front cover of this book to learn how you can do this. Talk to someone in your group about your desire to believe and trust in Christ.
- ▶ **Investigate.** Look into the truth of the resurrection for yourself. Many books address the resurrection, such as *Buried Hope* or *Risen Savior: The Search for Jesus' Tomb* by Charles Quarles or *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel.
- ▶ **Share.** Who has God put on your heart to hear the truth of the resurrection? Ask God to put someone on your heart who needs to hear about His resurrection and eternal life.

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the final paragraph from page 84 of the PSG:

God's not against healthy living; He's for it! But let God be the source of your joy. Joy is found in Him and the sure hope of His resurrection.

PRAY: Conclude by thanking the Lord for His great sacrifice and for His resurrection. Ask Him for the courage to share the hope of the resurrection with others.



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