

# Thomas – Deconstructing Doubt



John 20:19-29

Thomas missed an opportunity to meet the resurrected Jesus and struggled to believe his fellow disciples when they shared the details of their encounter. In Session Three we consider whether ‘doubting Thomas’ is a worthy nickname or whether this disciple moved from doubt to disbelief. We’ll also tackle the tricky topic of deconstruction. Is there a way to deconstruct what we believe in order to rebuild our faith in God on a stronger foundation?

## **You will need:**

- Lego (optional for the Beat activity)
- A Lego piece or building block for each member of the group to take home
- Permanent markers



## **Beat**

## **Leader’s notes:**

Our Beat activity is Lego-themed. If possible, lay out a selection of Lego for the young people to create a build as they arrive at the Bassline session. As they build, discuss whether they prefer building with instructions or focusing on their own creations.

## **Watch:**

LEGO 10307 Eiffel Tower Animated Speedbuild – Blender Geometry Nodes Animation (1:36)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdN5o4OSWWw>

## **Ask:**

- Have you ever created a Lego build as complicated as the Eiffel Tower? Share what you created.
- What are the challenges attached to a large Lego build like this?
- Have you ever spotted a mistake in the earlier stages of your build and had to correct it? How did you manage to deconstruct and reconstruct your creation?
- What are the different kinds of bricks that build our Christian faith?

**Leader's notes:**

It may be helpful to refer back to this Lego activity and clip when tackling the topic of deconstruction in the Sound Check section.

 **Bridge****Leader's notes:**

As you watch the clip (below), discuss the deconstruction process. Why do you think the person is taking apart the Lego set? What process are they using to deconstruct it carefully?

**Watch:**

Time-lapse deconstruction of LEGO 75192 UCS Millennium Falcon (1:30)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5ja9uNyJtO>

 **Amplify****Ask:**

- What is the name of the biblical character associated with doubt?
- When someone doesn't believe something is true, they are sometimes called a 'doubting Thomas'. How would you feel if one moment of perceived weakness in your life was used as an example throughout thousands of years?

**Say:**

We find Thomas's moment of doubt in the Gospel of John when he missed the opportunity to see the risen Jesus. Let's watch the clip to find out what happened.

**Watch:**

LUMO - Gospel of John Chapter 20:19-31 (3:13)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxmGFQYHill>

**Ask:**

What were the disciples doing when Jesus first appeared to them?

**Say:**

The disciples were together, locked in a room as they were afraid to be discovered by the Jewish authorities.

**Ask:**

What was the first thing Jesus said when he appeared to them?

**Say:**

Jesus recognised their fears and reassured them, bringing peace to the situation. However, Thomas had not witnessed what had happened.

**Read:**

**<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’**

**But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.’**

– (John 20:24-25)

**Ask:**

– What legitimate reasons did Thomas have for not believing the disciples?

**Say:**

Doubt is defined as ‘a feeling of uncertainty or lack of conviction’.

**Ask:**

- Although he is known as ‘Doubting Thomas’, was it really doubt that he was expressing or had it tipped into unbelief?
- Is Thomas searching for answers or has he already decided what the answer is?

**Say:**

This may feel like a fine line to walk, but when we doubt something, we often search for answers to bring us peace and certainty again. In this instance, Thomas had already decided that their claims were unbelievable. Unless he saw Jesus for himself, then he found it impossible to believe.

**Ask:**

- What is the difference between doubt and unbelief?
- Have you ever experienced doubt or unbelief on your Christian journey? What was it like?
- What brought you peace in those moments of doubt or unbelief?

**Read:**

**<sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’**

**<sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.’**

**<sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’**

**<sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’**

– (John 20:26-29)

**Ask:**

- What reassuring phrase does Jesus use when he meets with the disciples? Where have you heard it before?
- At what point did Thomas' doubt turn to belief?
- How did Jesus respond to Thomas?

**Say:**

Despite his moment of doubt, Thomas recognises who Jesus is: 'My Lord and my God.' It is often in moments of doubt that we are able to grapple with the truth of who Jesus is, and our faith is strengthened as a result.

**Ask:**

- What are the positives and negatives of experiencing doubt in our Christian faith?
- What is your response to the following quote?

**'I do not believe there ever existed a Christian yet, who did not now and then doubt interest in Jesus. I think, when a man (or woman) says, "I never doubt," it is quite time for us to doubt him.'**

- Charles Spurgeon

**Say:**

As we grapple with the difficult questions of the Christian faith, we can be assured that Jesus is with us, bringing peace in every moment of uncertainty.

 **Bridge****Leader's notes:**

If your group would like to explore the theme of doubt in more depth, then watch and discuss the following clip.

**Watch:**

Do You Ever Doubt Your Faith? - John Lennox (Oxford) (4:00)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgwqFE1995Q>

 **Sound Check****Say:**

In our Amplify section, we have studied Thomas's doubt and unbelief regarding Jesus. It's important to consider how this story impacts our own faith journey. Our Sound Check section

today tackles the challenging topic of deconstruction. The term deconstruction may be new to you, especially when it is described in relation to the Christian faith. However, in recent years, a number of prominent church or worship leaders have stepped away from Christianity after going through a period of 'deconstruction'. Jesus encourages us to ask questions of our faith and understands our moments of doubt – but does deconstruction go a step too far?

**Leader's notes:**

A clip and discussion notes are provided below which can be adapted for your group's level of understanding. The aim of the activity is for the young people to recognise the difference between questioning our faith and taking it apart with no intention of ever reconstructing it again. The content of this clip can be tricky to understand, but it may start the young people thinking about healthy ways to explore doubts connected to their faith rather than pulling their beliefs completely apart.

**Watch:**

Deconstructing Christianity: Is It Always a Bad Thing? – Axis (stop at 6:12)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKFs7QSkHZs>

**Say:**

The clip mentioned that pinning down a definition for deconstruction can be challenging; but when looking at a text, the dictionary defines it as follows:

Deconstruction – a detailed examination of a text in order to show there is no fixed meaning but that it can be understood in a different way by each reader.

**Ask:**

How did the academic idea of deconstructing a text quickly become a problem, especially when referring to the Bible?

**Say:**

Rather than breaking down the text to understand it more, the aim is to pick it apart, especially if it doesn't say what you want it to. Alternatively, deconstruction can simply mean breaking something down to look at its component parts.

**Ask:**

- How did the Lego illustration help you to understand the idea of deconstruction?
- In what ways can the deconstruction of our faith be a positive thing?
- What examples of deconstruction and reconstruction do we find in the Bible?
- What is the difference between the academic version of deconstruction and a more Christ-like version that strengthens our faith?

**Say:**

According to the clip, one version of deconstruction 'seeks to tear down and destroy', while the other version 'seeks to rebuild and create a more Christ-like faith'.

**Ask:**

What are healthy ways to deconstruct the parts of our faith that need rebuilding, without completely dismantling Christianity?

 **Bridge**

**Ask:**

– What is your response to Tim Keller’s quote from the clip?

**‘Christians in our cultural moment will have to rethink their faith, but at the same time they must learn to ‘doubt their doubts’. They must deconstruct not only their tacit (understood or implied without being stated), mistaken beliefs and their secondary beliefs that pose as primary, but also just as importantly, the cultural narratives that are offered as the alternatives to Christian faith.’**

– Tim Keller

 **Selah**

**Say:**

One of the Christian musicians who has undergone the process of deconstruction is Audrey Assad. Despite her doubts about the Christian faith, her music continues to bless many people who follow Jesus. As we reflect on the peace that Jesus brings in moments of doubt, we’ll listen to her rendition of ‘It is Well’.

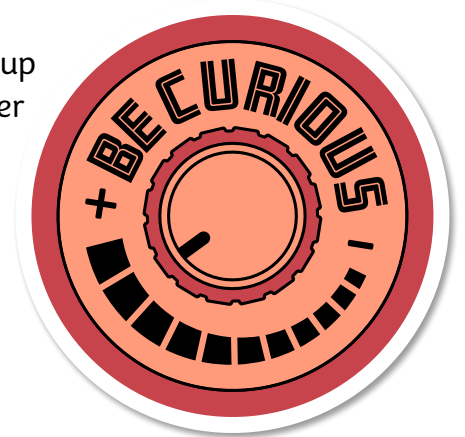
**Leader’s notes:**

Provide a Lego brick or building block for each member of the group and permanent marker pens. As the music plays, ask each member of the group to select a Lego piece. On one edge they can write their name, and on the other they can write the word ‘peace’. When the music finishes, pray with the group and encourage them to take home the Lego piece as a reminder that Jesus is with them in their moments of doubt.

**Watch:**

‘It Is Well With My Soul’ – Audrey Assad (4:10)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zY5o9mP22VO>



## **Coda**

**Say:**

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

**Ask:**

As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?

What is the one thing you will take away from this session about healthy ways to deal with our doubts?

**Leader's notes:**

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.

