

Strengthening Our Relationship with Jesus By Learning from The Apostle Thomas



John 11:5 – 16; 20:24 – 29

Sermon Discussion Guide

September 20, 2020

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STUDY NOTES

Fallen asleep (11:11). This phrase means to have “died” as the following conversation makes clear. The OT equivalent is “slept with his fathers” (see, e.g., 1 Kings 2:10 and throughout 1 – 2 Kings of 1 – 2 Chronicles). Occasionally, death is compared to a deep sleep from which people will one day be awakened (e.g., Daniel 12:2).

So that you may believe (11:15). This indicates that Jesus knows raising Lazarus from the dead will lead to a deeper faith on the part of the disciples who witness this miracle.

Thomas (11:16). The Aramaic name Thomas means the Twin.

Unless I see (20:25). Apparently, Thomas thinks the disciples may have seen a ghost (cf. Matthew 14:26). Later, it becomes clear that Jesus’ resurrected body is not a phantom or spirit apparition but a real body.

1. What kinds of things interfere with your spiritual growth?

The Bible is full of stories about spiritual struggles and overcoming hurdles to our spiritual growth. Jesus’ disciple, Thomas, is the perfect example of such a struggle. Thomas is often called “Doubting Thomas.” However, Gary Serago prefers to call him “cautious” instead of “doubting” because Thomas sought the truth and then accepted it when confronted by the resurrected Christ. Thomas’ story of caution and acceptance has been lived out over the past two thousand years by countless people. In this lesson you will consider what barriers you may have to growing stronger in your faith and relationship with Jesus Christ.

Read John 11:5 – 16.

2. Why did Jesus’ disciples respond negatively to Jesus’ plan to return to Judea (v.7 – 8)?
3. How did Jesus answer His disciples’ hesitancy about returning to Judea (v.9 – 10)?
4. What suggestion did Thomas make (v.16)? Do you think Thomas was being courageous, hopeless, or reckless? Why?
5. Have you like Thomas ever felt Jesus was calling you to do something very risky? What happened?

Read John 20:24 – 29.

6. What did Thomas say he needed to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead (v.25)?

STUDY NOTES

Eight days later (20:26). This refers to the following Sunday, one week after the resurrection, because the starting day was also included in counter the number of days.

7. What did Jesus say to Thomas (v.27)?

8. What did Jesus say about seeing and believing (v.29)?

9. When you have doubts in your faith, what have you found helpful?
 - Going to the Bible
 - Talking with your Small Group Leader
 - Sharing with friends
 - Going ahead "on faith"
 - Spending time alone with God
 - Being encouraged by the faith of others

10. How would you describe your spiritual life right now?
 - Full of caution
 - Full of faith
 - Half and half
 - Increasing in caution
 - Increasing in faith

11. Is there anything interfering with your relationship with Jesus Christ?
If so, how will you move through those challenges and hurdles to have a closer relationship with Him?