



**Northland Christian Church
Group Discussion Guide
For the Week of September 26, 2021**

Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. You do not have to answer every question. These are intended to help spark discussion. Refer to as needed. Ultimately we want God's answers, not man's opinions. Always land where God lands. (ex: Where do we see that in the Bible?) Give grace. Give time for growth. Don't force it.

Connect

- Do you use filters on your photos on social media? If so, which one is your favorite? If not, why not?
- What's been the highlight for you this past month? A challenge?

The Context

What's Going On In Your Head? - Reconstruction

Is it ok to doubt? Is it ok to struggle in our faith? Is it ok to ask big questions, not find easy answers, and still move forward in our walk with Jesus? Does questioning have to lead to a lack of faith, or could it be an access point into greater growth, maturity, and increasing in faith? Could struggling, in safe and authentic community with fellow believers, be an avenue for deeper intimacy and connection with God? How does Jesus view our struggles? Our doubts? Our wrestling in our faith?

To begin to dive deeper into this topic and discover some helpful stories and narratives for life, we're going to look at the story of one of Jesus' closest followers in the Bible. Thomas. Famously dubbed Doubting Thomas. Let's read his story together.

Engage the Bible - Read and Review Surprises, Takeaways, and Observations from:

John 20:24-29

“Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 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.” 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!” 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.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.””

John 20:24-29 NIV

Discuss

1. How did Jesus meet Thomas in his doubting? What is Jesus' response to Thomas' doubting?
2. What does that say about the heart of Jesus? What does that say about how Jesus sees us in our struggles, pain, wonderings, and doubts?
3. How has Jesus met you in your questions in the past? What was this like? What fruit or faith was born from this experience?
4. How can you relate to Thomas in this story? Have you ever doubted your faith - or doubted what you know about God in some way? (Ex: God's goodness, love, mercy, timing, or care)

5. How comfortable are you with the idea of struggling with your faith? How has this been addressed by those close to you in your life in the past? Were you allowed to vocalize your struggles and questions? What affect has this had on your faith and relationship with Jesus?

Dave shared with us three stages that Thomas went through in his faith journey. Belief, Doubt, and Solidified Belief. This story can help us find a helpful pathway or blueprint for our journey through doubts and struggles. Just as Jesus met Thomas in his doubts, He will and wants to do the same for us. It's not an easy fix, or a quick fix, or filled with cliché or easy answers, yet the journey of sharing with Jesus and others can help develop and grow our faith - even through the darkness, struggles, and questioning. We need only create a safe space for ourselves and for others to express, process, discuss, discover, and depend on Jesus.

6. How might it affect your faith if you express your doubts? (See Mark 9:24)
7. What can we learn from these words from Jesus in terms of struggles, compassion, and love?

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

8. What practical steps can we take to show and share Jesus with those that are struggling, questioning, or doubting?
9. What helps you trust that Jesus has deep compassion for you? (See Matthew 9:36)
10. What is a trial in your life that God has turned into a blessing?
11. How can we encourage each other this week? How can we pray for one another this week?

Challenge:

Give everyone about a minute of silence with eyes closed (if they're comfortable) to name (in their mind) their biggest area of struggle, doubt, or confusion. Then have them sit with open hands, palms up, hands sitting in their lap (a posture of surrender and trust). After about 30 seconds of this, have them silently imagine handing that named struggle over to God. Then have them repeat this simple prayer.

“God, thank you for always being there for me. Thank you for loving me without condition or hesitation. Thank you for taking this struggle for me. It's yours, Lord. It does not define me. I give you permission to rewrite my thoughts and feelings on this, Lord. I look forward to what you're going to do. Thank you. Amen”