

I missed seeing Elvis live! It was 1977, two years after I graduated from HS, was working out of town, had tickets to concert and gave them away!

Always regretted it...Seen him on TV, listened to music on radio, But Sometimes...you just have to be there. And, when you aren't present and you miss something really big, you regret it.

That's what happened to Thomas...the bible doesn't tell us why...Thomas wasn't with the other disciples when Jesus came

And as a result, he has forever been known as "Doubting Thomas" (Bad rap, as we said a couple weeks ago)

Turn with me to John 20 and let's talk about How To Love People That Doubt

John 20:19-31

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How Do You Love People That Doubt?

We meet them all the time.

- Sometimes they are already believers...and they are going through "*The Dark Night of The Soul*"
 - Sometimes they don't know Jesus, and they are coming to grips with faith, struggling
- 3 Things We Can Do To Help

1. Encourage Them To Be Where Faith Is Built Up And Made Stronger.

Vs 19-24

Here is something we need to remember. All places are not equal! Some places BUILD Faith, Others DON'T!

Vs 24: *Thomas was NOT with the other disciples when Jesus came!*

- Thomas doubted...because he wasn't present, he wasn't in a place that encouraged him to believe!
What are the places that BUILD faith?
~*Fellowship/Community*(Church)They were all together. They all believed...Thomas wasn't there...he didn't believe!
~*Being with Jesus*: Spending time with Jesus: Mt 9:24 "*I believ...help my unbelief*" (Father)
~*The Word of God* Rom 10:17 "*Faith comes by hearing the message, the message is heard through word...*"
~*Worship*: Communicate truth, Knit us together, Tells our Story, Transcendent! (Moment, He is here)
~*Group*: Study, Accountability, Community, Encouragement

Applic: What does that mean for us today? It means, when you are talking with someone whose faith is foundering, weak, Help them understand what they need to do!

- *Spend time with Jesus!* (Devotions...Prayer...Talk with Him!)
- *Be regular in attendance at worship:* New pattern: Twice a month..moving toward 1 time
No guarantee, Def more likely!
See him on Boat? Yes... every time I met Him there, 100 times in worship!
Ask...which is more likely? Matt 18:16 "*Where 2 or 3...*"
- *Be a part of a bible study group* Rom 10:17 Faith comes from hearing the Word of God!
In addition, you get accountability, Community, Encouragement

Illus: Suppose you were part of a baseball team: Only went to half the practices?
Suppose you were part of a choir: Only half of the rehearsals.
Suppose only went to school half time: How would you do on the test?

Yet...we are in church, bible study, no devotions...and wonder why we doubt and our faith is weak!

Illus: I want to speak a word about "Liking It" I often hear people say..."Well, you know, I don't like going to church..."

As I was talking with Darlene Friday am about this part of the Sermon, Phone buzzed...she said...Trainer

Groaned...Because something happens twice a week every week...and I don't like it! (Go to trainer!)

But guess what...I go...and not only that...after a week of being out of town with students...(Went Monday, Tuesday 4th)

2. Encourage Them To Depend On The One God Provided To Build Our Faith.

Vs 22

John 20:22 "*Receive the Holy Spirit*"

In this transitional period...I think Thomas didn't "get" the HS until he believed...and he didn't believe...cause not there!
God has provided the HS in the life of a believer for specific purposes. *One of them is to encourage and empower our faith!*

TAKE A QUICK PAUSE

There is a difference between the empowerment of the HS in the Gospels and Acts and Today

Gospels and Acts are transitional. What happened with the giving and receiving of HS was different!

- Gospels: HS not yet been given...Until Jesus left. He told us that. John 16:5-7 "*Better for you if I go!*" (Acts 2)
- Now: HS is given at the time of salvation.
Key: Once we know Jesus we have him: He is present in our life...but not always in CONTROL!
I say it this way sometimes...*WE HAVE HIM...BUT HE DOESN'T ALWAYS HAVE US!*
That's why Paul writes; Eph 5:18: *Be filled with the Spirit* (controlled")
We don't get more of Him... He gets more of us!

Illus: Spiritual breathing! Out...Confess In...Surrender

Thomas missed that...wasn't where he should have been, missed the HS...and as a result...his doubt overcame his faith

When we aren't surrendered to the HS, then we fight the same battle

If you have never practiced that...try it during your devotions...during your day...before ministry of some kind: Breathe!

3. Challenge Them To Take A Step Of Faith.

Vs 24-29

Thomas said I won't believe until I see and touch and feel: "I will not believe!" Will lit = *I will not have faith!*

I hear people say that all the time. The very best response you can have...is what Jesus had to Thomas

- Check it out. Put me to the test! See if it is real!
If you don't believe God is there...pray and say, God..SHOW ME!
That's what Jesus did with Thomas: Come over here and see
(*Interesting that Thomas doesn't appear to have actually DONE it...*)
- Choose to believe: Belief is a choice!
Notice what he said: "I will NOT!"
You choose to believe...or NOT to believe
Choose: Heb 11:6 "...without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."
Believe: Make an intelligent choice: He is there...and His hand can be seen
Rom 1:18-20

Applic: Here is the bottom line: The problem isn't that people CAN'T believe.
It is that they choose NOT to believe!

Illus: Only believe it if I can see it, touch it smell it taste it. Not true: Gravity, Electricity,
We live our lives believing in ALL KINDS of things we can't see touch taste or feel
We see the RESULTS: And the same thing is true of believing in God
Challenge them to make a choice

CONCL: What do you do when people are doubting?
Whether believers or unbelievers...the same thing

1. Go Where Faith is Built up
 - Worship,
 - Word of God
 - GroupIf they don't...or won't...don't be surprised that their faith stays weak!
2. Encourage them to Depend on the HS
 - Teach them to Breathe!
3. Challenge them To Make a Choice and Believe
 - They do it every day...in all different kinds of ways
 - Get in car turn the key...believe
 - Get on a plane...fly...they believe

Maybe you are here today...and you have never believed in Jesus. I want to challenge you...

- You have seen His hand at work...
- See Him in the lives of the people here
- Make a choice...choose to put your trust in Him