

Believing Without Proof

Notes for Leaders

Even as young adolescents practice their faith, they still have nagging doubts about God. This service encourages them to believe—even without proof—that, through and in Jesus, God is always with them to guide them and strengthen them in the growing-up process.

You will need a prayer table on which is placed a Bible (open to John 20:24–29), a candle, and cut-out cardboard crosses, one for each participant. Assign readers and then open the service gathered in a circle around your prayer table.

Opening Prayer

- Leader** We believe in you, loving God, but sometimes we wonder about life and faith and your presence in our lives.
- Reader One** At school and with friends no one talks much about you. On TV people never go to church or pray or talk about you, except to be funny.
- Reader Two** Our culture tells us that if we have money, we don't need you. Even in church people don't seem to believe, really believe, that you are in their lives.
- Reader Three** Where can we find answers to our questions about you? Please give us the gift of faith. We really need your help. Amen.

Scripture Reading (John 20:24–29, paraphrased)

Reader One It happened that Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, was absent when the risen Jesus came. The others told Thomas about it but he refused to believe and even demanded proof.

Reader Two A week later, the disciples were once again gathered, and this time Thomas was there. “Peace be with you,” Jesus said. Then he said to Thomas, “Take your finger and examine my hands. See the wounds there (from the crucifixion). Do not doubt any longer, but believe that I have been raised up.”

Reader Three Thomas was clearly embarrassed, but he also said a prayer of belief: “My Lord and my God.”

Reader Four Jesus then said to Thomas, “You only believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen me and yet have believed.” The Word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

Guided Meditation

Leader Close your eyes and focus your attention on the palm of your hand. Look at the lines. Imagine that you are following one of those lines. (Pause.) It leads to a room where a heated discussion about faith is taking place. One person looks at you and asks what you think about your faith. What answer will you give? (Pause.) Still looking at you the person says: “Sometimes it’s hard to believe without any evidence. But remember what Jesus said to Thomas: ‘Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’” Take time now to talk to God about these things. (Pause.)

After a minute or so, invite participants to open their eyes.

Group Response

- Leader** Sometimes we don't see the signs of your presence, loving God, because we don't look around us to see the good works done in your name.
- Right Side** Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe in me.
- Left Side** Sometimes we don't hear your voice, Christ Jesus, because we don't take the time to quiet down and listen.
- Right Side** Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe in me.
- Left Side** Sometimes we are like Thomas, Holy Spirit of God. We want to touch you and feel your presence.
- Right Side** Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe in me.
- All** Amen.

Silent Personal Prayer

- Leader** Distribute the crosses. Take this cross as a sign of your Christian faith. Hold it as you now spend a few minutes in silent prayer.

Allow three minutes and then gather the group around the prayer table once again.

Group Closing Prayer

- All** Loving God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, we often come before you like Thomas, doubting your presence and asking for signs. Help us to understand that we are the signs of your presence. When we love one another, serve the needy, and gather in your name, it is we who announce your presence to others.
- Teach us how to do this loving God. Strengthen our faith and give us the courage to believe—even though we have not seen you. Amen.