



## Unit .27

### Session .03

# Jesus Prepares His Disciples

#### Scripture



## John 20:19-29

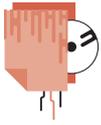
**19** When it was evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked because they feared the Jews. Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

**20** Having said this, he showed them his hands and his side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. **21** Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you.” **22** After saying this, he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” **24** But Thomas (called “Twin”), one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. **25** So the other disciples were telling him, “We’ve seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “If I don’t see the mark of the nails in his hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

**26** A week later his disciples were indoors again, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” **27** Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Don’t be faithless, but believe.” **28** Thomas responded to him, “My Lord and my God!” **29** Jesus said, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”

## Intro Options



**Main Point:**  
**Just as the Father sent  
Jesus into the world,  
Jesus also sends us to  
be on mission.**

### Option 1

Preparation is everything when you are an athlete planning to compete in the Olympic Games. The difference between being a gold medalist and a silver medalist is often milliseconds, and every day of training and nutrition can be the difference maker.

#### ▪ What situations in your life require preparation?

You probably aren't preparing for the Olympic Games, but you do prepare for much of life. You do research for a school project, you prepare in whatever sport you play by practicing, or you memorize lines for the school play. In today's session, Jesus prepares His disciples for the instructions He would give them not by explaining an intricate training strategy, but by being with them and empowering them to do the work of sharing the good news with anyone who will listen.

### Option 2

There are two kinds of witnesses. The first is someone who sees something happen. The second is someone who has experienced something personally. Both kinds of witnesses are important. But the first kind changes your perspective; the second kind changes your identity.

Consider the examples from Scripture of witnesses who were forever changed after an encounter with God. Abram became Abraham. Moses went from refugee to deliverer. Ruth went from being a widow picking up leftovers to being the wife of the landowner. One day, David was a shepherd boy, the next, he was anointed king. Mary was an ordinary teenager until an angel told her she would be the mother of the Messiah. On the road to Damascus, Paul went from murderer to missionary. The list could go on.

There's a difference between watching others follow Jesus and following Him daily ourselves. The watchers witness something. The followers become witnesses of Someone.

#### ▪ What is something remarkable you have seen that changed your perspective?

## TEACHING PLAN

### Read John 20:19-20.



It had been a whirlwind of a weekend for Jesus' disciples. The One they expected to restore the kingdom to Israel had been crucified (Acts 1:6). But on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene announced to them that she had seen Jesus (John 20:18). As we come to today's text, we see Jesus' disciples hunkered down with locked doors because they feared the Jewish leaders. However, neither the grave clothes nor the locked door was an obstacle to Jesus. He simply appeared in their midst.

John's account of this astounding appearance focuses on three statements Jesus made to His disciples. The first was a greeting that recalled Jesus' promise to give them a peace that would overcome their troubled hearts and their fear (John 14:27; 16:33). Imagine the comfort those words offered the fearful disciples. In fact, what an encouragement for all of Jesus' followers who are sent into the world on His mission. Even in a troubled world where we face suffering and death, God's peace guards our hearts against fear and anxiety.

- **How does the peace of God guard our hearts against fear and anxiety? When have you experienced God's peace even though you were facing the troubles of the world?**

The announcement of peace was only the beginning of Jesus' message when He appeared to His disciples. With the next statement, He was ready to send them on a mission.

### Read John 20:21-23.



Jesus prepared His disciples for this statement in two ways. First, He showed them His hands and side. The scars on His hands and side were marks of His suffering and His victory. He had overcome death, which was exactly why His disciples were overjoyed when they saw Him.



Second, Jesus repeated His greeting of peace. With this, He offered them this mission: Just as Jesus was sent by God, Jesus would also send His disciples out into the world. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus frequently referred to Himself as One sent by God. In alignment with that sending, He sends His followers



## 99 Essential Doctrines (p. 96, DDG)

### Evangelism

It is the duty and privilege of every Christian and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all thus rests upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle.

# COMMENTARY

**Main Point:**  
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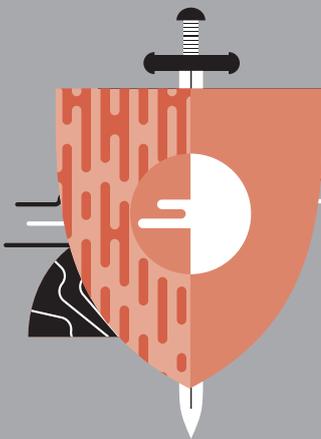
## John 20

**19-20.** “The disciples had huddled together behind locked doors out of fear of the Jewish authorities, when Jesus suddenly stood in their midst. After issuing the traditional Jewish greeting, ‘Peace’ (shalom; v. 19), Jesus identified himself to his followers by showing them his nail-pierced hands and the wound in his side (v. 20), then commissioned them. Some, especially Peter, may initially have been apprehensive to see Jesus in light of their less-than-perfect performance surrounding Jesus’s crucifixion. But joy prevailed, and Jesus showed no sign of ill will but rather attended to the business at hand (v. 20). Startlingly, the risen Lord can walk through closed doors. This indicates that resurrected bodies are no longer subject to the same limitations that apply to our present earthly bodies. On other occasions, Jesus is able to vanish from sight at an instant (Luke 24:31). His followers may mistake him for a ghost (Luke 24:39) or initially fail to recognize him (Luke 24:16; John 20:14; 21:4). But while Jesus’s glorified body can walk through closed doors and appear or disappear apparently at will, it is still the glorified body of the same Jesus who was crucified only a short time before his resurrection appearances.”<sup>1</sup>

**22.** At first, the timing seems confusing. It appears that Jesus gave His disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of His resurrection. Yet, about forty days after His resurrection, Jesus instructed His disciples to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). This gift came on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after Jesus’ resurrection, enabling the disciples to carry out the mission they had been given (Acts 2:1-47).

The key to understanding verse 23 is the detail that Jesus “breathed on them.” This is most likely some sort of symbolic action. D. A. Carson suggests that the exhaling and command to receive the Spirit “are best understood as a kind of acted parable pointing forward to the full enduement still to come (though in the past for John’s readers).”<sup>2</sup>

## In Defense (p. 98, DDG)



“Thomas’s confession of Jesus as his Lord (Greek, Kyrios) and God (Greek, Theos) provides a literary link with the references to Jesus as God in the prologue (1:1, 18). This is one of the strongest texts in the NT on the deity of Christ (see 1:1). Some cults try to explain away this clear affirmation of Jesus’ deity by arguing that Thomas’s statement was merely an exclamation of astonishment that, in effect, took God’s name in vain. Such an explanation is unthinkable, however, given the strong Jewish moral convictions of the day and because it is not consistent with the text, which explicitly says that Thomas said these words to him, that is, to Jesus. Thomas’s statement is in fact a clear confession of his newly found faith in Jesus as his Lord and God. John’s entire purpose in writing this book is that all readers come to confess Jesus as their Lord and God in the same way that Thomas did.”<sup>3</sup>

## TEACHING PLAN

Jesus' words here echo His prayer the night before His death. Jesus prayed a number of things for His disciples, but He also declared that He would send them just as He had been sent (John 17:18). Jesus invites us to participate in the same mission in which He participated. His Father sent Him, and He asks us to go on mission with Him, sending us with His peace and commanding us to love others and speak the truth with grace. 

- **How does Jesus' victory over sin and death and His promise of peace encourage you as you live on mission?**
- **Why is it important to remember that, as Christ's ambassadors, we are on a mission of offering peace?**
- **What are some steps a believer can take in order to live as a disciple who is sent on God's mission by Jesus?**

**Read John 20:24-29.**



Jesus showed astounding kindness and care for Thomas. This doubting disciple heard the reports but now was seeing Jesus with his own eyes. Yet, when he witnessed Jesus suffered, he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus met Thomas in his unbelief and offered up the proof for the truth of the resurrection. Questioning is not an assault on the truth but instead a helpful exercise that, for Thomas, resulted in deep faith. Faith cannot be forced or coerced. It must come from a deep belief that God is who He says He is and a confidence in what Jesus has done.

But how do we understand Jesus' response in verse 29? While Jesus affirmed Thomas' faith, He also seemed to issue a slight rebuke. Or did He? Jesus' statement here is what we call a beatitude—a statement of blessing. The most famous beatitudes Jesus spoke are recorded in Matthew 5:3-12. But here, after His resurrection, Jesus offered another. Rather than rebuking Thomas, Jesus anticipated a time when He would ascend to heaven and no longer be physically present on the earth. Once that happened, all those who believe would do so without the benefit of having seen their resurrected Lord.

This is our situation today. We do not see Jesus physically, in the flesh. We do not need to do so. Peter affirmed this by explaining to the churches that, even though we have not seen Jesus, we are still able to love Him and rejoice because we have received the goal of our faith: salvation (1 Pet. 1:8-9).

In fact, John would later reveal that he recorded certain events with one purpose in mind: so that we might believe Jesus was who He claimed to be and that we might have life in Him (John 20:30-31). In other words, John pointed to physical evidences and eye-witness testimonies to support belief in the historical resurrection of Christ. While we may want the type of evidence Jesus offered to Thomas when He told Thomas to observe His hands and side, we can't deny that Jesus has left us with other types of overwhelming evidence regarding His resurrection. And for those who look to the evidence—to Jesus—and believe, a blessing is given. How encouraging that Jesus' response to doubters is not one of anger, but one of loving encouragement for those who doubt because the resurrection really took place.

# COMMENTARY

**Main Point:**  
Just as the Father sent  
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## John 20

**23.** “The forgiveness of sin mentioned in this passage (v. 23) does not mean we as individuals or as the church collective have the authority to declare sin forgiven in terms of absolution but in terms of proclamation.”<sup>4</sup> We are permitted to proclaim on earth only what is already true in heaven through the leadership of the Holy Spirit, namely, that those who repent and believe the gospel message have received the forgiveness of sins.

**24-29.** Like Thomas, all of us struggle with doubt in one form or another. Even believers in Jesus have moments of doubt. In fact, it has even been noted that there are different kinds of doubts, and that these different types of doubts can vary from person to person.

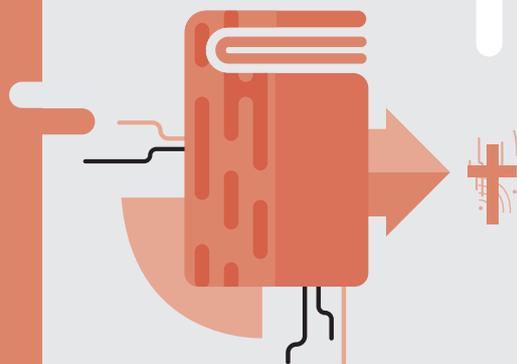
For some people, the doubts are intellectual. In other words, the doubter finds something about Christianity that seems to contradict with something in science, history, philosophy, and so on. This means some people must overcome intellectual hurdles before having assurance about the truthfulness of Christianity.

For others, doubts grow out of an emotional state. People may find it easy to doubt God and/or His goodness in their lives because of a tragic event or because of deep depression and anxiety. It is also important to note that emotional doubts often masquerade as intellectual doubts; however, when we get to the root issue, it becomes apparent that the doubter is experiencing emotional pain and frustration. Since the pain and frustration is emotionally based, intellectual answers offer little help to those struggling with emotional doubts. For emotional doubters, a pastoral response with biblical counseling is what is most often needed.

The third type of doubt is volitional, meaning the doubter makes a decision, or acts out of his or her own free will, to forsake the truth. Volitional doubt is essentially an unwillingness to obey. James refers to volitional doubt when he speaks of the indecisive or “double-minded” person (1:6-8). This kind of doubt can come from weak faith, stubbornness, arrogance, or a lack of repentance. For example, if a person is involved in an inappropriate physical relationship before marriage, then it would all of a sudden become “convenient” for that person to start doubting Christian teaching on purity and so on. We should take this kind of doubt seriously because it expresses itself in disobedience and rebellion.

## (p. 97, DDG) Christ Connection

As God the Father sent His Son, God the Son sends His people to the world to call on sinners to place faith in Christ. As Christians, we are a sent people who are being formed in the image of our sending God and our suffering Savior.



# Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

## Head



**Why do you think having doubts or asking questions can be a common experience, even for Christians?**

**How does Jesus' response to Thomas both challenge and comfort those who doubt?**

## Heart



**Share about a specific time when you felt overwhelmed with the peace of Christ.**

**How does knowing God's peace strengthen your faith in Him?**

## Hands



**Why do you think some Christians don't see themselves as being ambassadors for Christ in this world?**

**What are some common distractions in life that may cause us to neglect our mission? How can we overcome these distractions?**

**Main Point:**  
**Just as the Father sent  
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## Head

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It's not difficult to see Thomas' qualities in ourselves and others. At some point most of us will have mild doubts—intellectual, emotional, or volitional (of the will). Whatever form, doubts cause a level of uncertainty within us that must be addressed.

Thankfully, we serve a Savior who welcomes those who have questions and doubts—One who calls us to believe, not in spite of the evidence, but because of the evidence. Christianity has never been about having a blind faith. Rather, it has always pointed to the historic resurrection of Jesus as grounds for believing. The Christian faith is a genuine faith because the object of our hope is real—Jesus Christ, our risen Savior.



## Heart

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The peace Jesus promised to His disciples is rooted in the Old Testament and comes from the Hebrew term *shalom*. It means much more than the absence of conflict. Instead, it refers to a condition of prosperity, welfare, completeness, and wholeness. In essence, it is a state of everything being right, just as God intended it to be. It is a peace that the world is incapable of giving—one only that can be given by God Himself.



## Hands

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The mission of sharing the good news of Jesus is not only for those called to be pastors or missionaries. The mission of the gospel is the mission of every believer, both individually and collectively as the church. Jesus has given His authority to the church to proclaim forgiveness of sin and freedom from guilt on the condition of repentant sinners responding to the gospel message. The church has received this authority from Jesus and by the giving of the Holy Spirit to be God's representatives on earth, an outpost of His coming kingdom. It is through Christ's work that we were called to Him and that we may call others to Him.