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ABOUT THOSE DOUBTS

Thomas was not there Easter Sunday. He skipped church. Not a good idea. When the other disciples told him in John 20:25, "**We have seen the Lord**" he must have thought they saw a ghost. Then he was confronted with the classic conundrum, that old Marx brothers line, "*who you gonna believe, me or your lyin' eyes?*" Will doubt overcome faith, or will faith overcome doubt?

What would you do? Thomas opted for doubt. "**Unless I see, and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into His side, I will never believe.**" Strong statement. Totally discounting the testimony of his fellow disciples. Why doubt their word? Are they not credible witnesses?

Because both doubt and faith are intentional. Two sides of the same coin. You're either inclined to want to believe something or you've already decided you don't want to believe. Will you like what's on the menu? Or the people you're with today? Is that candidate going to win the election? Do you require more evidence? Or would any new facts ever change your mind? Who would you believe?

When it comes to Jesus, ALL the same evidence is available to everyone, and it's ALL the evidence anyone should ever need. But people who "*don't want to believe*" cannot be convinced by any evidence or facts. Conversely, people who "*want to believe*" often overlook important facts. Even some Christians would rather "hope" for something they want to be true, than actually "believe" the real truth.

What is doubt? Refusal to accept available evidence, and decide to not believe, in spite of the facts. **What is faith?** Agreement with available evidence and deciding to believe. Faith always follows facts. "*Blind faith*" means believing something without evidence, or in spite of evidence to the contrary. But the Christian faith is eminently reasonable, always based on irrefutable evidence: God's Word.

Thomas didn't really understand his own doubt. It IS hard to believe Jesus is alive. Thomas didn't mean to be arrogant, but he was. That's the reality for people who refuse to believe, as if nothing can be certain until they sign off on it. How does Thomas expect anyone else to ever take his word for anything?

Here are four powerful questions you can use with doubters and skeptics to help them see reality. **#1 - "What do you mean by that?"** - Make sure you're talking about the same ideas. Regardless of words used, people can mean different things by the same terms. Generations use different meanings.

#2 - "Where do you get your information?" - People need to confront their own presuppositions. No one knows everything, but often act like it. No human authority is omniscient. Could they be wrong? If you're your own authority, your argument loses credibility, because you can't know everything. Atheists won't admit they cannot account for logic and reason, which derive only from the Christian worldview.

#3 - "What would it take to change your mind?" - This helps people realize they are predisposed to either doubt or believe. Many will refuse to admit they aren't really seeking truth, or even more facts.

#4 - "What if you're wrong, and you die?" - This blows away all the smoke-screens and ramps an argument to its ultimate end. If its "truth" we're talking about, then there are eternal consequences. The only ultimate omniscient authority of truth is God Himself, and what He has revealed in His Word. We're not asked to believe smoke and mirrors. God provides evidence. We're asked to believe credible witnesses of what He says and what He's done. That's why God provides us the written Bible.

For Thomas, doubt overcame faith. Only seeing was believing. His pessimistic personality shows in John 11 and 14. A very literal thinker, perhaps he didn't always see the forest for the trees. In John 20:26, Jesus was very gracious to Thomas. He repeated the scene Thomas missed the previous Sunday. Again the doors are locked and Jesus appears in their midst and says "**peace be with you**" - don't be afraid, it really is Me, Jesus, alive - with God's *shalom* perfect peace for you.

Thomas is faced with the irrefutable proof he demanded. In John 20:27, Jesus said to Thomas, "**Put your finger here and see My hands, and put out your hand and place it in My side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.**" It is Jesus! Thomas can recognize Him, touch Him, eat with Him. Thomas began with the idea that "*seeing is believing*" - but Jesus has changed all that. Next time: "*believing is seeing.*"