

SUB TOPIC THEME:

Good Doubt

LESSON OBJECTIVE:

To help students see the benefit of using doubt as motivation to better understand their beliefs.

By showing how doubt can lead us to ask hard questions and grapple with truths that in the past were passively accepted, we can gain a deeper understanding of God and

his purpose for our lives. It is important to emphasize the foundation of faith and obedience to God in the midst of our exploration, so that each of us does not lose sight of the absolute truth that the Lord offers.

**Set Up Info:****Supplies Needed:**

1. Copies of the Student Response sheet (printed below)
2. Bibles so you can look up the Scripture story (or copy the ones below)
3. A passion to see students transformed in their understanding of God's love and presence in their lives!

Instructive Prep:

Doubt may be something your students have already begun to encounter and engage with in their faith, or it may be an entirely new concept to them. Regardless, it is vital that open discussion and blunt honesty be praised and guided rather than quickly stunted. This might be most adeptly achieved by sharing times of your own life when you experienced healthy motivation as a result of the presence of doubt.

In order to ensure safety in the midst of exploration, be sure to discuss and emphasize the way that core beliefs in Christianity are non-negotiable while at the same time other beliefs, no matter how hot-under-the-collar it makes some people, are in fact things we will never fully comprehend until we are in the throne room of the Almighty. Therefore, humility, obedience, faithfulness, and accountability need to be constantly paired with our taboo questions, wide-spread wanderings, and outlandish ideas. Doubt is stretching and it is often uncomfortable for more developed and established Christians to witness or undergo. But keep the faith, provide gracious guidance, and cover them with

prayer, and all the while having faith and hope in the ultimate power of God the Father Almighty.

The progression of these studies is four-fold: *learn, feel, do and what next*. We want students to learn something new, connect at an emotional level to some degree, and participate in doing something during the study (like making a hand gesture as a tool/reminder). Finally, the *what next* focuses on a change in attitude and/or behavior, which you will find in the challenge of the Life Application section. Remember, the movement is toward spiritual and emotional transformation in kids' lives, so the application section based on God's truth is really the crux of the time together! Have fun and lead well.

INTRO:

Doubt can be wonderful! Doubt can be terrifying! Do one of these declarations strike a chord with you? Have you ever been through a time of great doubt in your faith? Maybe you have, maybe you are going through it right now, or maybe this seems completely foreign to you. The fact is, doubt is an experience almost every single one of us will experience at some point in our faith journey. That might seem intimidating to you or perhaps it kind of appeals to you and makes you a little excited. We are all made differently, and that includes the way we each react to doubt. What is important, no matter who we are, is keeping our feet firmly planted on the foundation of Scripture and the absolute truth that God has given us.

INTRO STORY:

God created this world, both the seen and unseen parts, in an amazing way. When God created Adam and Eve, he did not immediately give them a rundown of basic chemistry, earth science, psychology, theology, math, language, art, etc. Instead what he gave them, and each human since them, was the desire and ability to seek and find, to discover and uncover, to create and imagine the many mysteries and wonderful inner-workings of this world. That's amazing! That's exciting! That's inspiring!

You see, there are some core truths to our faith that are non-negotiable. Later we'll have a chance to take a look at the Apostles' Creed; but overarching that is a call to have humility, accountability, faith, and obedience to Jesus as the Lord of our life. These postures allow us to interact with doubt while having a firm foundation in truth. And that allows us to discover deeper truths about this world and our understanding of the Creator.

Take a look at this story from King David's life. Look for the ways that doubt paired with humility, accountability, faith, and obedience play their parts in this story.

2 Samuel 21:1-14

During David's reign there was a severe famine, which lasted for three full years. So David consulted the LORD about it, and the LORD said, "Saul and his family are guilty of murder; he put the people of Gibeon to death." (The people of Gibeon were not Israelites; they were a small group of Amorites whom the Israelites had promised to protect, but Saul had tried to destroy them because of his zeal for the people of Israel and Judah.) So David summoned the people of Gibeon and said to them, "What can I do for you? I want to make up for the wrong that was done to you, so that you will bless the LORD's people."

They answered, "Our quarrel with Saul and his family can't be settled with silver or gold, nor do we want to kill any Israelite."

"What, then, do you think I should do for you?" David asked.

They answered, "Saul wanted to destroy us and leave none of us alive anywhere in Israel. So hand over seven of his male descendants, and we will hang them before the LORD at Gibeah, the hometown of Saul, the LORD's chosen king."

"I will hand them over," the king answered.

But because of the sacred promise that he and Jonathan had made to each other, David spared Jonathan's son Mephibosheth, the grandson of Saul. However, he took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons that Rizpah the daughter of Aiah had borne to Saul; he also took the five sons of Saul's daughter Merab, whom she had borne to Adriel son of Barzillai, who was from Meholah. David handed them over to the people of Gibeon, who hanged them on the mountain before the LORD—and all seven of them died together. It was late in the spring, at the beginning of the barley harvest, when they were put to death.

Then Saul's concubine Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, used sackcloth to make a shelter for herself on the rock where the corpses were, and she stayed there from the beginning of harvest until the autumn rains came. During the day she would keep the birds away from the corpses, and at night she would protect them from wild animals.

When David heard what Rizpah had done, he went and got the bones of Saul and of his son Jonathan from the people of Jabesh in Gilead. (They had stolen them from the public square in Beth Shan, where the Philistines had hanged the bodies on the day they killed Saul on Mount Gilboa.) David took the bones of Saul and Jonathan and also gathered up the bones of the seven men who had been hanged. Then they buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan in the grave of Saul's father Kish, in Zela in the territory of Benjamin, doing all that the king had commanded. And after that, God answered their prayers for the country.

Intro Questions:

1. What brought doubt into David's life?
2. What is one way you saw him pair doubt with humility, accountability, faith, or obedience?

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Have the students stand back to back to see who is taller. Then proceed from shortest to tallest.

1. Have you ever experienced doubt in your faith? How did that make you feel and what did you do at the time? (use Student response sheet)
2. Do you have a personal experience when doubt led you to a deeper understanding of God's will? (use Student response sheet)
3. What is your gut/natural reaction to the subject of doubt and questioning? Does it intrigue you? Excite you? Make you nervous? Make you angry? Discuss the pros and cons of each of your natural dispositions and remember that God created us as a community with different strengths and abilities that all work together.

CENTRAL BIBLE PASSAGES

Take a few minutes to read together the Apostles' Creed and discuss the part this (or any creed) plays in dealing with doubt. Then read through the Scripture and consider why having these core beliefs is vital to faith.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth;
 And in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord.
 He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,
 He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 Was crucified, died and was buried.
 He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again
 And ascended into heaven. He is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
 From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 The holy universal church,
 The communion of saints,

The forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body,
And life everlasting.

Amen

John 14:1-27

“Do not be worried and upset,” Jesus told them. “Believe in God and believe also in me. There are many rooms in my Father’s house, and I am going to prepare a place for you. I would not tell you this if it were not so. And after I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that you will be where I am. You know the way that leads to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going; so how can we know the way to get there?”

Jesus answered him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me. Now that you have known me,” he said to them, “you will know my Father also, and from now on you do know him and you have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father; that is all we need.”

Jesus answered, “For a long time I have been with you all; yet you do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Why, then, do you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe, Philip, that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I have spoken to you,” Jesus said to his disciples, “do not come from me. The Father, who remains in me, does his own work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. If not, believe because of the things I do. I am telling you the truth: those who believe in me will do what I do—yes, they will do even greater things, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask for in my name, so that the Father’s glory will be shown through the Son. If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.

“If you love me, you will obey my commandments. I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you forever. He is the Spirit, who reveals the truth about God. The world cannot receive him, because it cannot see him or know him. But you know him, because he remains with you and is in you.

“When I go, you will not be left all alone; I will come back to you. In a little while the world will see me no more, but you will see me; and because I live, you also will live. When that day comes, you will know that I am in my Father and that you are in me, just as I am in you.

“Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. My Father will love those who love me; I too will love them and reveal myself to them.”

Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “Lord, how can it be that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?”

Jesus answered him, “Those who love me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and my Father and I will come to them and live with them. Those who do not love me do not obey my teaching. And the teaching you have heard is not mine, but comes from the Father, who sent me.

“I have told you this while I am still with you. The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and make you remember all that I have told you.

“Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid.

LIFE APPLICATION:

1. Take a moment and each of you write down whether or not the core beliefs expressed in the Apostles’ Creed are your beliefs. If you feel comfortable, share your answer with your group. *Note to Leaders: This might be something you move through quickly or something your group needs to spend more time on. Decide ahead of time what would best suit your group based on where they are at in their journey.* (use Student response sheet)
2. Write down 3-5 questions you have or areas of doubt you would like to know more about. Then create a group list together and talk about ways you might begin to explore some of these doubts as a community. (use Student response sheet)
3. Take some time today to pray as a group. Allow time for each student to pray a brief prayer. Focus on expressing your desire (or lack of desire) to be motivated by doubt and ask God to lead you through whatever discoveries he knows will be beneficial for you.
4. This week, commit as a group to taking at least one of the subjects from your group and beginning to explore it. Check back in with your youth leader next week to get some guidance and where to go from there.

4. WRITE DOWN 3-5 QUESTIONS YOU HAVE OR AREAS OF DOUBT YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT. THEN CREATE A GROUP LIST TOGETHER AND TALK ABOUT WAYS YOU MIGHT BEGIN TO EXPLORE SOME OF THESE DOUBTS AS A COMMUNITY.

5. WRITE DOWN GROUP MEMBERS' PRAYER REQUESTS