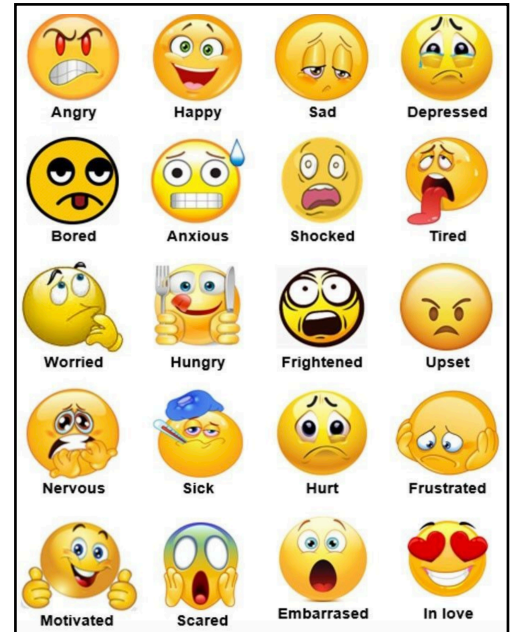


Jesus and Thomas John 20:24-29

1. What situations/people bring out the strongest emotions in you - Positive? Negative?
2. How important do you think our emotions are in our faith journey?
3. Have you ever doubted, been angry with, or argued with God?

Read John 20: 24-29

The name Thomas is usually automatically associated with the term “doubter” which seems a bit unfair when we look at other stories which mention him in the gospels. It is easy to be labelled, usually negatively, but extremely difficult to have that invisible label removed.



4. Have you ever been labelled? How did it feel?
5. How do you think Thomas felt when he heard from the other disciples that Jesus had appeared to them and he wasn't there?

I think Thomas' emotions were more than just doubt - possibly fear, knowing he had been left out when Jesus visited, feeling like he was being punished for something or possibly envy?

Emotions are often seen in a negative way and we often try to suppress them or pretend that they aren't important. Being honest, especially with ourselves, about how we feel is important because strong emotions can often show us areas where we need God's healing. Doubts, fears, rejections and pain are feelings that everyone experiences multiple times in our lives, and these can often make us feel like God is very far away, and even make us wonder if He really loves us.



What I love about this story is that it's not just a story of disappointment and doubt - although unfortunately that is often the focus of this story.

Jesus should be the focus.

Jesus doesn't ignore Thomas. He makes a special appearance to Thomas and speaks to him directly to assuage his doubts. He does this by showing him the scars that He has endured - scars that He endured FOR Thomas, but also FOR US.

Jesus didn't mock Thomas, he didn't ignore him or reject him as a disciple. He found him and showed him that He understands his feelings. But He also showed Thomas what he NEEDED to see - His scars. Having doubts and questions is not wrong if we do something with them. You should be honest, search for answers, wait for Jesus to reveal Himself to you. Most importantly - go back to the basics of your Christian faith - Jesus on the cross - Jesus with the nail scarred hands - proof that Jesus loved you enough to die for you.

6. *Discuss the difference between positive and negative reactions to doubt.*

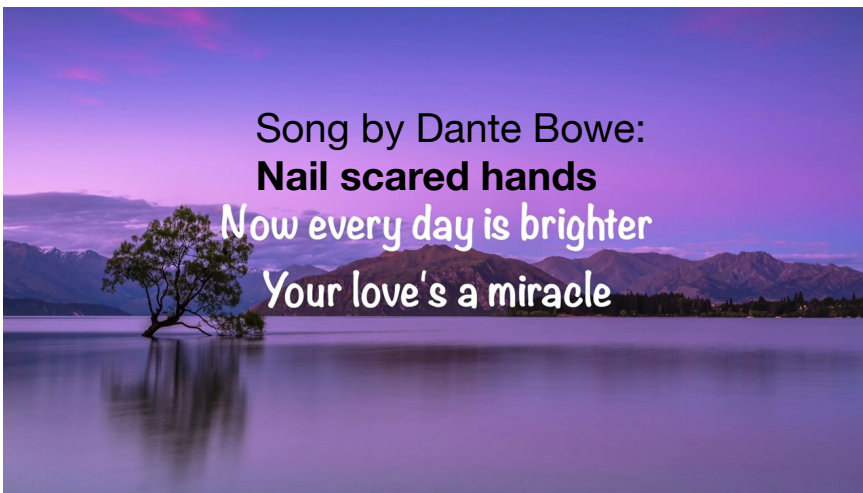
If positive doubt causes us to seek out answers, search for truth, wait patiently for Jesus' to reveal Himself to us, then negative doubt causes us to reject God and His promises, reject His sacrifice, His healing and the freedom that comes from living in His love. When we work through our doubts, our faith becomes stronger. When our focus is on Jesus we will respond like Thomas: "my Lord and my God!" The choice is ours.

Read Isaiah 53: 4-7

Our faith is in a God who sacrificed for us, who experienced all the terrible negative emotions that we have - because He needed to die for us and "by His wounds we are healed." These scars are the proof that Thomas needed and they are all the proof that we need centuries later.

7. *Personal Reflection: Consider if there are doubts and fears, pain and negative emotions in your life that need to be expressed to Jesus - be honest with yourself and God. It might not be easy and might take you on a journey of questioning, searching, repentance but ultimately a journey of healing and freedom.*

Our healing and our freedom is in Jesus' nail scarred hands.



Take a listen to this song and let the reality of Jesus' death bring the reality of Jesus' love to you.

Pray for each other and for people close to you who you know have doubts and fears - that they may be free and healed by Jesus.