

LESSON 7: DEALING WITH DOUBTS

This includes:

- 1. LEADER PREPARATION**
- 2. LESSON GUIDE**

1. LEADER PREPARATION**LESSON OVERVIEW**

Having authentic faith in Jesus doesn't mean you'll never have doubts. Fortunately, though, Jesus isn't afraid of our doubts. Throughout the Bible, "spiritual giants" experienced doubt and questioned God. He didn't punish or shame them for their doubt, though. God knew their heart and responded with grace. The same is true for us. Jesus wants us to be honest about our questions and doubts, and he'll help us grow closer to him in the process.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. **WHAT:** In a relationship with Jesus, doubts and questions are normal—and can help us grow in our faith.
2. **WHY:** Teenagers who are struggling with doubts need to hear that Jesus welcomes their questions.
3. **HOW:** Young people can be bold in sharing their questions and doubts with Jesus, and they can trust that he'll remain faithful to them.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Genesis 17:1-6, 15-22; 18:1-15

SECONDARY SCRIPTURE

Genesis 21:1-7

TEACHING PREP

**LEADER
TIP**

Use this short overview to prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your group, you'll want to absorb it as you prepare to lead.

Read Genesis 17:1-6, 15-22; 18:1-15; and 21:1-7.

These verses tell of God's interaction with Abraham and Sarah as he promises to make them a great nation. We see how the couple's faith was tested and how God handles their questions and doubts.

Twenty-four years earlier, Abraham had obeyed God and left his home without knowing what God had in store for him. God promises Abraham he'll be the father of many nations, but Abraham is so old that he and his wife, Sarah, try to "help" God's plan along. Abraham has a child with Sarah's maid, Hagar, and then God is silent for 13 years.

When God appears to Abraham in Genesis 17, Abraham falls on his face. He must have been astounded by God's faithfulness, even after the long silence. Abraham had made assumptions about God and how he'd carry out his promises. But God was bringing clarity to his plan: Abraham and Sarah would have a son together. In verse 19, God promises Isaac to them. Despite the couple's doubts, God is faithful to his promise.

God isn't afraid of our doubts and questions. He knows our hearts, and he knows if we're looking to him for answers or trying to create our own shortcuts. Remind students that even a faithful man such as Abraham had doubts about God's promises, but he stayed in relationship with God and was honest about his feelings.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

TEXTS OR TWEETS

Send one or both of these messages to your students prior to your meeting. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- *Did you know you can have faith and doubt at the same time? Come find out how—you'll be glad you did!*
- *Have you ever wondered what Jesus thinks about doubt? It might surprise you. Please join us!*

PARENT EMAIL

Send this email to parents following the lesson to encourage them to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear Parents,

This week in our series "My New Life With Jesus" we talked about dealing with doubts. Every Christian walks through times of doubt in their faith journey. Doubt is normal and even healthy. It's what we *do* with our doubts that's important.

Our discussion focused on the Genesis account of Abraham and Sarah. God promised the couple a child in their old age, and even though Abraham is regarded as a faith hero, he still doubted God's promise.

Please have a conversation with your teenager this week about doubt. You can begin with these questions:

- *When have you doubted Jesus or one of his promises?*
- *How do you think Jesus feels about our doubts and questions?*
- *What makes you feel comfortable or uncomfortable sharing your doubts? As a family, how can we support one another in that area?*

Thank you for your ongoing support and prayers for our ministry! Have an awesome week!

LESSON 7: DEALING WITH DOUBTS

2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED



**LEADER
TIP**

You'll need two sheets of paper, one that says "I Believe It!" and one that says "I Doubt It!" Hang the papers at opposite ends of the room.

Review the Doubting Thomas game described here:

<https://teresaklassen.wordpress.com/2010/04/11/doubting-thomas-ice-breaker-idea/>

Either print out the questions or read them from a computer or tablet during the activity.

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then lead students in this activity.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Stand in the middle of the room while I share some statements with you. After each one, you'll need to decide if you believe it or doubt it. Move to the sign you agree with for each fact. Keep track of how many you get correct. Ready?*

Read the questions, pausing after each so students can move to a sign.

ASK:

- *What made this easy, and what made it difficult for you?*
- *How is this game similar to the decisions you have to make each day?*
- *In general, what types of doubts or questions do you deal with?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *This was a fun way to think about what we believe and what we doubt. Today's topic is spiritual doubts. Believe it or not, it isn't wrong to doubt. At some point or another, every Christian has doubts and questions. What matters is how you handle the doubts that arise. Are you willing to take them to Jesus?*

TEACHING POINTS



**LEADER
TIP**

Use the Teaching Points to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Genesis 17:1-6, 15-22; 18:1-15 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so several people have a chance to read.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Even though Abraham was close to God, he would have run to the “I Doubt It!” sign on the wall. God’s promises seemed too far-fetched, especially for someone of Abraham’s age. We can learn a lot from Abraham—and from God’s faithfulness to him.*

1. FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CAN STILL HAVE DOUBTS

ASK:

- *What’s the craziest promise someone has ever made to you? Was the promise kept?*
- *Abraham, who was 99 years old, laughed in disbelief at God’s promise. How do you suppose God felt about Abraham’s laughter—and his doubt?*
- *Why do you suppose Abraham, an old man who’d known God for a long time, doubted God’s power?*
- *Look at verses 19-22 again. How would you describe God’s heart toward Abraham?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *The Bible describes Abraham as God’s friend, yet Abraham doubts God’s power. How could he be God’s friend and still doubt? Notice that Abraham’s doubts didn’t bother God. He isn’t afraid of our doubts and questions, either. Jesus actually invites our doubts and questions, and he uses them to strengthen our faith in him.*

2. BE HONEST ABOUT YOUR DOUBTS

ASK:

- *In what ways can lies affect friendships and relationships?*
- *Why is honesty so important between true friends, and does that mean you’re honest about everything?*
- *Why do you think Jesus wants you to share your doubts with him?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Jesus wants us to be honest because that makes a friendship with him true and deep. Because Jesus made us, he knows what we think, how we feel, and what we wonder. So our doubts don’t surprise him. Jesus can work with our doubts, but first we must be willing to acknowledge them. When we do, the Holy Spirit can work in our hearts to help us pursue truth and answers.*

3. GOD IS FAITHFUL EVEN WHEN YOU DOUBT

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Genesis 21:1 says God kept his promise and blessed Abraham and Sarah with a child. Abraham was 100 years old when their son Isaac was born! Abraham’s doubts didn’t change God’s heart toward him. Humans are often unpredictable, difficult, and untrustworthy, but God knows whether or not we’re sincerely seeking his truth.*

ASK:



PAIR
SHARE

- *What would motivate God to keep his promise, even after Abraham doubted him and Sarah laughed about it?*
- *What are examples of Jesus maintaining his faithfulness, and what impact did that have?*
- *What doubts have you experienced in life, and how have you seen Jesus respond to those doubts?*

Ask students to form groups of two or three to discuss these questions.

LIVING IT OUT

ASK:

- *What's your biggest doubt about Jesus, and why?*
- *Do you feel mostly comfortable or mostly uncomfortable sharing these doubts, and why?*
- *What has been most helpful to you during times of doubt?*

Bring everyone back together, and ask a few people to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *In a moment we'll pray together. I'll pause in the middle of the prayer so you can silently talk to Jesus. Tell him your honest feelings, including your doubts. When you open every part of your heart to Jesus, he'll walk with you and strengthen you.*

Lead students in a time of prayer, pausing so they can offer individual prayers in silence. Close by thanking Jesus for listening to all our doubts and questions—and for helping us find answers.

SUMMARY



LEADER
TIP

Provide a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) this lesson's content, (2) the dialogue that took place today, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the Scripture below.

"Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son"
(Genesis 18:14).