

Doubting Thomas didn't doubt

By [Steve Pankey](#)

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The Lord said to Thomas, "Do not doubt, but believe." We know that line well. Too well, in fact, since Jesus didn't say anything to Thomas about doubt. In Matthew 14, when Peter tries to walk on water and sinks, Jesus, reaching out his hand saves him and says, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" Whereas in John 20, when Jesus and Thomas meet in the upper room, Jesus lets Thomas touch his hands, feet and side and then says, "Don't be without belief, rather believe." Don't believe me, here's the Greek words:

δισταζω	ἄπιστος	πιστός
<i>distazo</i>	<i>apistos</i>	<i>pistos</i>
doubt	a-believing	believing

See, despite what millions of sermons by thousands of preachers have told you, doubting Thomas didn't doubt, but rather he was a-believing because in John's Gospel, belief isn't about an intellectual assent to some list of facts, but instead, belief is about a relationship. When Jesus died on the cross, so too did his relationship with Thomas. Thomas believed Jesus, he gave him his heart and his hope, and that belief couldn't live beyond the grave.

Unless, that is, Jesus lived beyond the grave, and that is so hard to fathom, that Thomas wanted proof before he handed his heart over to be burned again.

We all have doubts from time to time, that's a normal part of living the life of faith, we shouldn't begrudge Thomas for doubting (even if he didn't). What Jesus longs for in this post-resurrection encounter with Thomas is that we all might believe in him by handing over our hearts and our hopes that he might bring them to the fullness of joy. That's what living an Easter life is all about. That's what Thomas wanted, he just needed to see it, touch it, experience it before he was willing to risk relationship again. Believe me, I get that.

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