

## Is every end just merely that? Some endings hold great surprises!!

When one reaches the end, especially if it is the end of earthly living, it seems like one has finished the race, and that's about it! Jesus, was the only one in history who sprung a surprise - his death was just a comma. What seemed the end, was just a beginning of new hope, new strength and courage, but most of all a new mission to live for his followers! These studies invite you to accompany Jesus during his last few hours on earth, and to experience the same joy and wonder of a new beginning.



FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL STUDENTS, MALAYSIA

Working amongst youth of college and university-going age, FES has many years of experience and many stories of young people who have grown and matured in the Lord. This series is just an extension of our ministry to encourage the encounter of God through the Word.

### **BREAKTHROUGH** SMALL GROUP SERIES

6 in the series for Individuals or Groups

"*BREAKTHROUGH*" based mainly on the Gospel of John, reveals Jesus at his most radical, bringing timely breakthroughs into lives and situations. In each encounter, he seems to scratch where people itch, revealing to them that God does not remain at a distance. Here we meet Jesus making outrageous claims about himself, though they do not seem so outrageous on closer examination. His life when it seemed to come to an end, merely signified a new beginning. He left behind a legacy of new hope and light for us to journey on, unravelling a new way to live!

1. Not From A Distance
2. Scratching Where It Itches
3. I AM 4 U
4. The End Or The Beginning?!
5. Light For The Journey
6. A Whole New World

ISBN 983-2393-03-5

# THE END OR THE BEGINNING?!

**BREAKTHROUGH**  
SMALL GROUP SERIES



**fes**  
FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL STUDENTS  
RESOURCES



# THE END OR THE BEGINNING?!

---

By :



*Fellowship of Evangelical Students, Malaysia*

---

6 studies for Individuals or Groups

## Contents

	page
The Journey ~ "BREAKTHROUGH"	ii-iii
Foreword	iv-v
Introduction	v
Using The Guide	vi
<b>①</b> Unshaken In His Mission	1
John 17:1, 18:1-12	
<b>②</b> The Horror Of Utter Rejection	4
John 18:19-24, 28-32; 19:1-16	
<b>③</b> The Triumphant Finish	7
John 19:18b-30	
<b>④</b> O Death Where Is Your Victory?	10
John 19:41-20:2; 20:10-18	
<b>⑤</b> Locked Doors (I) ..... Commissioned!	13
John 20:19-23	
<b>⑥</b> Locked Doors (II) ..... Belief!	16
John 20:24-31	

ISBN 983-2393-03-5

Published in 2001 by Fellowship of Evangelical Students, Malaysia.

Fellowship of Evangelical Students (FES) Malaysia  
386-B, Jalan 5/59, 46000 Petaling Jaya.  
Selangor, Malaysia

*All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from FES Malaysia, P.O. Box 58, 46700 Petaling Jaya. Selangor, Malaysia.*

Cover photograph : Paula Wong  
Cover scanning & final touch up : Kevin Thomas

Printed by Printmate Sdn. Bhd., 16 Jalan Industri P.B.P. 7, Taman Industri Pusat Bandar Puchong, 471 00 Puchong. Selangor, Malaysia.

## The Journey ~ "BREAKTHROUGH"

You must be wondering by now, why this series is called the "Breakthrough series" and what "Breakthrough" is all about. Well, "Breakthrough" is nothing more than our journey with the students in trying to bring the "evangelion" or Good News to our friends.

### Challenges Open Doors To "BREAKTHROUGH"

We were stuck!

*"What does FRIENDSHIP evangelism look like in real life? After friendships, what next? After sharing the Gospel outline, what next? How does one ease in to share the Gospel with a friend? It seems like nothing is happening!"*

These were often heard complaints amongst the students we minister to. It began with the challenge of helping our students evangelise through friendships and making it intentional. What seemed a challenge then, opened doors to this "Breakthrough"! Hearing what our friends in the UK were doing gave us ideas to start our own.

### Reaching Out Through Enriching Friendships



We did not want to treat people as targets, but rather persons whom God is interested in. Genuine, enriching friendships is one way we can "build highways" for the Lord to breakthrough into people's lives.

Thus, "Breakthrough" is a holistic endeavor focusing on FRIENDSHIPS, bearing the VOICE of the Gospel wherever God places us, and in sharing the MESSAGE of Jesus (through the gift copies of the Gospel of John). This also means that we are not in a hurry with our friends but are willing vessels in this process.

### What Have We Here?

The "Breakthrough series" are Bible study guides intended as companions to the gift of the Gospel of John. Having given the gift, we hope to pray for opportunities for our friends to "investigate" this Jesus.

Our vision and prayer is that the guides become vehicles in order that

-  you may behold the Lamb of God!
-  you may see and believe!

### The TEAM That Journeyed On .....

Yes, the team has journeyed on. We first mooted the idea in FES (*Fellowship of Evangelical Students*) in late 1999. When we felt that this was the way the Lord was leading us, we started work on getting the copyrights, working out campus strategies, writing the Bible study guides, etc. This has taken us more than one year in "brewing the stew"! We thank God for good partnership with both the UK and Malaysian Bible Societies. More than that, we thank God for each other in the FES team who have worked tirelessly just to see others given the opportunity to encounter the Word of life! The greatest glory and thanks goes to our very God Himself who moved mountains for us and brought in much needed resources.

### "Breakthrough" - JOHN'S Gospel

1. Printing the John's Gospels in Malaysia - Mary Vergis
2. Anglicised Contemporary English Version of John - UK Bible Society
3. Malaysian Copyright Holder - Malaysian Bible Society

### "Breakthrough" - Bible Study Series

1. Team of Writers - Annette Arulrajah, Audra Darshini, Chan Yoke Yee, Dan Fong Shin, Evelyn Wong, Kong Lee Ang, Loh Kim Cheng, Michael William
2. Layout for Guides - Dan Fong Shin & Evelyn Wong
3. Series Editors - Annette Arulrajah & Loh Kim Cheng
4. Proof Readers - Elisa Dass & Chan Yoke Yee

### Bringing "Breakthrough" To The Campuses

1. Paper on Sharing The Idea With Leaders - Loh Kim Cheng
2. Campus Strategies - Annette, Darshini, Fong Shin, Evelyn, Lee Ang, Kim Cheng, Michael
3. Publicity Handbills - Paula Wong & Kevin Thomas (SU)
4. Preparation of Training Modules - Annette, Darshini, Yoke Yee

\* All names mentioned above are fulltime FES staff during the period of our production.



## Foreword

One never knows what the e-mail may bring - a delightful surprise or more work! A polite message from PES Malaysia was both. "Before you come to Malaysia in August would it be possible for you to pre-edit a series of Bible studies we have written?"

I knew it would take many hours and much effort if it were to be helpful to the writers. But I didn't even pray about it. I knew it was the right thing to do. It has been the passion of my life to encourage young student workers anywhere in the world to make Bible studies the foundation of their evangelistic and discipling ministry.

It's g-r-e-a-t when these young workers can train their students in Bible studies. I think it's even greater when churches ask them for help in this same area. Over the decades from country to country I have seen churches revitalized or planted by graduates who learned to take the Bible seriously when they were students.

Last month I was in Poland for training university students in evangelistic Bible studies. The president of a fast-growing biblical seminary asked if I could do the same course for his theology students. It was a privilege. But what equally delighted me was to discover that we had met some 23 years ago when he was a student. "It was in that inductive Bible study course (at a European leadership conference) where I first learned to study the Bible. I didn't know it could be so exciting. That excitement for God's Word keeps growing. I want our students to know the same excitement so they can pass it on."

At our church this morning I started a new class. I dared to call it "In-depth Gospel Studies", because I think that our church is typical. People sincerely believe Jesus but know him only in bits and pieces. At best they have an album of popular Jesus photos. They need to see the down-to-earth Jesus as in a video, a moving drama. With that title I didn't know if anybody would come. To my surprise they kept coming and coming. What hunger these longtime Christians expressed! One of them, a lawyer, expressed it as "I want to know God more deeply, not just have a good feeling when I'm singing praise songs with others." At the end of the study in Luke 1, Tony asked if he could bring his not-yet-Christian girlfriend next week, because "I think she will dig this kind of study."

That's what the Bible studies in this series are about - scratching people where they're itching. When I did get to Kuala Lumpur last August I sat down with the writers for oral editing. It was a pleasure to work with them. They were highly teachable. And industrious. The sessions were fruitful. After that they re-worked their studies and helped each other in further editing.

Nothing pleases me more than to commend these Bible studies for your individual or group use on campuses, in homes, in workplaces, and in Sunday classes. If Bible studies are authentic (objective yet warmly personal), anybody - - Christian or seeker - - will benefit. For each study takes the biblical text seriously in helping people to see what it really says (not what they have pre-concluded); to think carefully about its meaning and to consider honestly its practical implications.

May this labor of love for our Lord and His church bring fruit, much fruit.

Sincerely in Christ,

Ada Lum  
Honolulu, Hawaii  
January, 2001

## Introduction

"The End Or The Beginning?!" is about Jesus' last few hours on earth. How was it all going to end? You can just hear the seconds ticking away, full and pregnant with steadfastness, courage and determination to accomplish his mission. Jesus was totally prepared to die!

There were many encounters with people. Some were his sworn enemies wanting his blood. Some were total strangers who were pulled into the fray, like Pilate. Some were very dear to him. His timely and discerning response to each, especially his sensitivity to those who will be grieving for him, set him apart from all other dying men!

Was death going to be the final fullstop? Or was it only a comma? What seems a dreadful end to a thirty-three year old man, has a surprising twist to it. Mary, the beloved disciples, and others literally get to see a "dead-man walking"!

You too, can be gripped and changed by this encounter, and it may prove a new beginning for you!



## Using The Guide



*Want to immerse yourself in the Word of God?*



*Want to leave the door open for SERENDIPITY (personal discovery) to take place?*



*The Breakthrough Bible study guides are for you then!  
Using the inductive approach, the process of O-I-A gives you the opportunity for such happy encounters.*

### O for Observation

To look at the text and pick up the facts (both obvious and hidden), searching for details. Asking questions of the text helps us see more facts.

### I for Interpretation

To discover the implications and meanings of the facts, particularly to the original writer or hearers of the Bible. Knowing the background and context will sharpen the interpretation process.

### A for Application

To find the meaning for us today, and see how we can put it to practice in our lives. We apply truth and principles that are timeless and universal.

### Our format ...

This approach comes alive in our format and the phases we take you through.

Getting Started draws you into the study. Be free to share but do not spend too much time on this.

Come and See gets you to observe the text and see its implications. We have included background information which can help you see the context and understand the meaning of the passage.

What About You - A Breakthrough? helps toward making the study personal to your life. This is the most important part of the study, so please do not skip it.

ENJOY!

## Study One

# Unshaken In His Mission

John 17:1, 18:1-12

## Getting Started

- 1 Think of a time when something 'bad' unexpectedly happened to you or someone you know. How did you feel? What was your reaction?

Having just celebrated the beloved Jewish Passover with his twelve followers, Jesus seemed to be saying goodbye. He washes their feet, advises them and prays for them. They then leave Jerusalem, cross the valley and ascend to an olive grove. Things suddenly take a turn. The temple police arrive to arrest Jesus!

## Come and See

- 2 No doubt Jesus knew that Judas was aware this was Jesus' favorite hangout. Besides, only hours before He had predicted Judas would betray him into the enemies' hands. So why would he go to a place where Judas knew he might be found (18:1-3)?



③ This is Jesus' last night. What do you think are his concerns and attitude to everything that took place (17:1, 18:4-9)?

④ Visualize the people who came to arrest him. When they see Jesus, they do not recognize him. We don't know what kind of man they expected to see. They are stunned when Jesus identifies himself. What kind of Jesus do they encounter?

⑤ The encounter in 18:10-11 reveals our bumbling friend Simon Peter doing something foolishly impulsive. Jesus reprimands and reminds Peter of his mission. What does that mission seem to be?

#### Notes

17:1 *There are already clues earlier on in John 7:39, 13:31 what GLORIFYING God is going to entail. It hints at Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross and the glorious salvation that would result.*

18:2-3 *John is giving an eye witness account of this overnight drama.*

18:3 *The DETACHMENT of soldiers could have been as many as 600 men.*

#### Notes (continued)

18:5 *'I AM' is the Hebrew name for God (Exo 3:14), and Jesus' use of it could have startled the crowd.*

18:11 *'Cup' in the Jewish context often meant suffering and/or the judgement of God.*

### What about you - a breakthrough?

⑥ We have been watching Jesus from the time he celebrated the Passover with his closest friends, until the arrest by his enemies. Jesus' concern was to glorify God and be ready to 'drink' his cup. Which part of this Jesus especially touches you?

⑦ Jesus was calm and cool headed because he knew his Father was in control of what was happening to him. What about you - where does your security lie?

⑧ Christians sometimes too easily say and sing that they want to glorify God. Before you can honestly say you are glorifying God, what would need to change in your lifestyle?



## Study Two

## The Horror Of Utter Rejection

John 18:19-24, 28-32, 19:1-16

## Getting Started

- ① Kids can be mean. Recall a time as a child when others teased you horribly. What were your feelings?

Then you may also begin to understand better what Jesus went through. His was the trial of the century. Immediately after his arrest, Jesus was brought before the Jewish court. He was questioned, struck in the face, threatened and shouted at. Now, in the Palace of the Roman governor there was more. There was Pilate trying to find charges against him. Also, a bored group of soldiers wanted to have fun intimidating him. Not to be left out, were the Jews, demanding for his blood!

## Come and See

- ② Put yourself in Jesus' sandals before the National Council. Remember what he has already gone through the last few hours. What do you see about these National Council members? What do you hear about their charges against him (18:19-24)?

- ③ Pilate quickly realizes that the Jews only came to him because they wanted a death verdict, which only the Romans could pronounce. The evidence for such a charge had to be treason, and no such evidence was forth coming from the Jews. What does John want us to see about the Jewish leader (18:28-31)?

- ④ Focusing now on Pilate, we see him swaying between setting Jesus free and facing the pressure from the Jews. He makes an effort to follow Roman law. Quite a few times he declares Jesus innocent but has him flogged, and then finally gives in to the pressure from the Jews (18:31,38; 19:4,6). Why do you think he behaved in such a way?

- ⑤ Picture the scene ... Jesus ... handed over to Pilate, accused, flogged, mocked, crowds shouting for his death, cross-examined. What do you further learn about Jesus as he goes through this supposed trial?

- ⑥ Legally Jesus is being judged by a governor representing the highest political power in the world. But Jesus makes a serious claim to Pilate (19:11). What is Jesus making clear to Pilate?

Notes

18:28 *Passover celebrations lasted several days, not just the Thursday night meal.*



*Notes (continued)*

*18:24 Caiaphas was the son-in-law of Annas, the former high priest. Many people still respected Annas as the true high priest although he was deposed by the Romans in AD15. He was succeeded by Caiaphas, the official appointee.*

*18:28 John does not detail for us the events of Jesus' appearance before the Jewish supreme court which was presided over by Caiaphas. Mark 14:53-15:15 gives an account of the Jewish phase of the trial.*

**What about you - a breakthrough?**

⑦ Like Pilate, there might have been occasions where you gave in to pressure. Can you recall the occurrence? Was there anything you could have done about it?

⑧ In spite of being rejected by men, Jesus still believed that God was in power. If you were to face a similar situation or are facing one now, would you be able to see things in the same way? What might you need to deal with in order to move in a similar direction as Jesus?

**Study Three****The Triumphant Finish**

John 19:18b - 30

**Getting Started**

① If you could choose the way you would die, what would you go for and why? Who would be by your side? What would be written on your tombstone?

Just a week before this, a crowd was waving palm branches to welcome the one they called the 'King of Israel' (Jn.12:13). He was their hero then. Today, the tides were changed. The crowds watched the same man going to his execution as a common criminal. Ironically, the charge against him read, "King of the Jews" (Jn.19:19). Golgotha was the place of the final triumph!

**Come and See**

② Follow Jesus on his way to his crucifixion and the utter indignity of his last few hours (19:17-19, 23-24). What would have been so humiliating for him?



③ Many things pass through the thoughts of a dying man. What seems to be the focus of Jesus' thoughts as he hangs dying on the cross (19:25-27, 28-30)?

④ John seems to be emphasizing ways in which Jesus' death fulfilled the Old Testament Scripture (19:24,28). What do you think he is trying to get at?

⑤ Jesus' death as a common criminal seemed like the final tragedy of his whole existence. Yet, his last words had a triumphant ring to it, "It is finished!" What do you think he meant by them?

#### Notes

19:17 *The crucifixion was the most inhuman way of execution. The victim carried his own CROSS (the horizontal part of it) to the site. Iron nails were driven above his wrists to fix him in place. The horizontal piece then was raised and nailed to the vertical piece which is already there on the site. The victim's feet were placed one over the other and nailed in. He was then left there to die. He would eventually die of suffocation.*

19:24 *According to custom, the victim was stripped naked for crucifixion. His clothes became the property of the execution squad, which comprised 4 Roman soldiers. They CAST LOTS for Jesus' undergarment because it was the fifth piece of clothing. They fulfilled the prophecy in Psalm 22:18.*

## What about you - a breakthrough?

⑥ You have been a participant on the journey towards Golgotha. What grips you as you watch and wait? Why?

⑦ Even in his utter pain, Jesus' thoughts were with his mother and her needs. As the eldest son, he fulfilled his duty toward her by making sure his best friend will look after her. What about your own relationship with your family and their needs? How can you be a better son or daughter?

⑧ The road to his death was paved with obstacles - friends who were selfish, authorities who were against him, rejection and betrayal by the crowds. Humiliation did not stop Jesus from fulfilling his task. In living out your mission for your life what would you need to persevere on? How will you help yourself towards finishing well?



## Study Four

## O Death Where Is Your Victory?

John 19:41-20:2, 20:10-18

## Getting Started

① If you have a loved one or friend who has passed away, you might visit their grave at significant times of the year. What do you feel each time you go there? To you, what does the graveyard stand for?

In the end, the one they loved was dead. As they left the place where Jesus was left hanging, recurring pictures of Jesus flashed through their minds - betrayal, shameful exposure, excruciating pain, wounds that could not stop bleeding! At the earliest possible moment, these bereaved and shattered ones went to the tomb to mourn. Upon their arrival, and to their astonishment, something strange and unthought of awaited them!

## Come and See

② Picture Mary on her way to the tomb. She discovers the stone at the entrance had been rolled back (20:1). What do you think were Mary's feelings and reaction?

③ Even when the others had gone back, Mary stays behind alone, weeping at the tomb. Why do you think she remains behind there (20:11-15)?

④ Imagine Mary's anguish, having watched Jesus die so cruelly on the cross, and now she has to face the fact the Jesus' body was missing. What suddenly makes her grief turn to joy?

⑤ What message is Mary to take to Jesus' friends (20:17-18)? What does this message tell about the accomplishment of Jesus' death?

## Notes

19:42 *It was the Jewish day of preparation, the day before the Jews observed their Sabbath. Sabbath was a holy day where no work could be done. Therefore, haste was necessary for Jesus' burial since it was almost sunset. Sabbath would be beginning soon.*

20:1 *It was Jewish custom and responsibility of the relative and friends to mourn at the tomb for the first three days after the death of their loved one.*

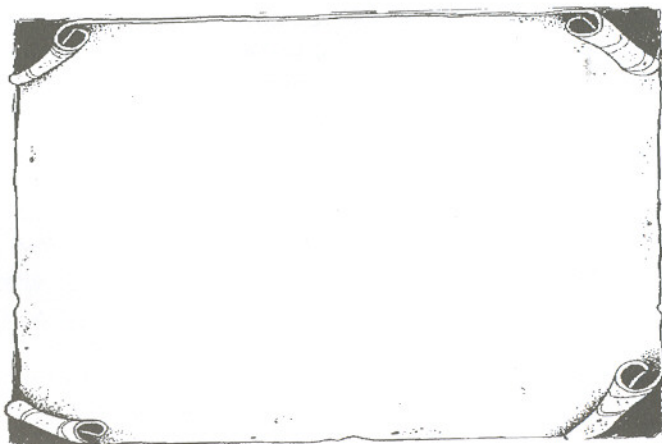


## What about you - a breakthrough?

⑥ Mary herself is quite a remarkable person. Her relationship with Jesus is also something special. What can we learn from Mary and also her relationship with Jesus?

⑦ Reflect on Jesus' death and resurrection and what it has accomplished. What is your personal response toward the risen Jesus?

⑧ Jesus' death has brought about a new relationship with him and God. There is so much promise for a closer family relationship. How does this truth affect you? What may not seem so right in your current relationship with God? Write your thoughts down in the form of a letter to Jesus.



## Study Five

### Locked Doors (I) .... Commissioned!

John 20: 19 - 23

#### Getting Started

① What do you normally do when you feel down or afraid? Think of one particular instance. What did you do and how did it help you get out of the dumps?

Just too much had happened over a short space of time. Jesus' shocking arrest, a Jewish trial followed by a Roman trial, both of which had been a mockery! Their beloved master was now dead, and the tomb had been empty early that morning. Jesus' followers were feeling a wide range of emotions - shock, fear, failure, grief. To add to their confusion, there was Mary Magdalene going around saying that she had seen Jesus alive again. Whatever it was, fear had a grip on them and they stayed together behind locked doors.

#### Come and See

② Obviously it was fear that kept them behind locked doors. Why and what do you think the disciples feared?



③ Jesus' appearance on the scene brought tremendous joy to the disturbed disciples. What are at least three ways in which his appearance helped them (20:19-21)?

④ Twice Jesus wishes them, "Peace be with you!" (NIV). It was spoken to two different situations the disciples found themselves in. What were these situations?

⑤ Jesus gives the disciples a whole new reason for living. He commissions them and gives them a pattern for their own mission (20:21). What implications does this have for the way the disciples should fulfill their mission?

⑥ Jesus does not leave the disciples without resources for their days ahead. What does he leave them with (20:22-23)?

#### Notes

20:19 PEACE or shalom which is the Hebrew word for peace means wholeness and well-being in every way.

20:23 : "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; ..." is very hard to take in a literal sense because only God can forgive sins. This verse is certainly not meant to be taken literally. Rather, those who proclaim the gospel are in effect forgiving or not forgiving sins, depending on whether the hearers accept or reject Jesus.

### What about you - a breakthrough?

⑦ Peace means a total wholeness and well-being. In a totally disruptive and broken world, peace is a gift. What aspect of your life currently needs this wholeness?

⑧ If you had been one of the disciples, what would Jesus' commission have meant to you? Now that he has called you and given you a new reason to live, what is your own response to him?

⑨ Each of us will be given a special passion or burden in our lives where we want to invest our energies and resources. What does the Lord seem to want you to specifically do in your world?



## Study Six

## Locked Doors (II) .... Belief!

John 20: 24 ~ 31

## Getting Started

① All of us experience surprises at one point or another in our lives. Think about some of the surprises that you have encountered recently. Choose one and share it with the group.

“We have seen him. He was with us. He showed himself to us”. It was with such excitement that the disciples told Thomas what they had witnessed earlier. The testimony of these disciples and Mary’s earlier encounter and words about the risen Lord did nothing to persuade Thomas to believe that Jesus was alive. Suddenly and wonderfully it happens again. Thomas’ wishes do come true! Do walls have ears?

## Come and See

② If anyone was a skeptic, it was Thomas. He just did not believe the disciples’ story that Jesus is alive. What caused Thomas’ unbelief (20:25)?

③ A week later, it all happened again as the friends of Jesus gathered behind locked doors (20:26-28). What brought Thomas to the acknowledgement of Jesus as his Lord and God?

④ Jesus seemed to know exactly what Thomas was worrying about with regards to his being alive again. He responds to where Thomas is by inviting him to touch and feel (20:27). Jesus then pushes him to a further point in his belief (20:29). What was Jesus trying to get Thomas to see?

⑤ Jesus seems to be including people like us and many others who are not eye-witnesses of his resurrection from the dead. Why do you think it is really more blessed for those who have not seen and yet have believed?

## What about you - a breakthrough?

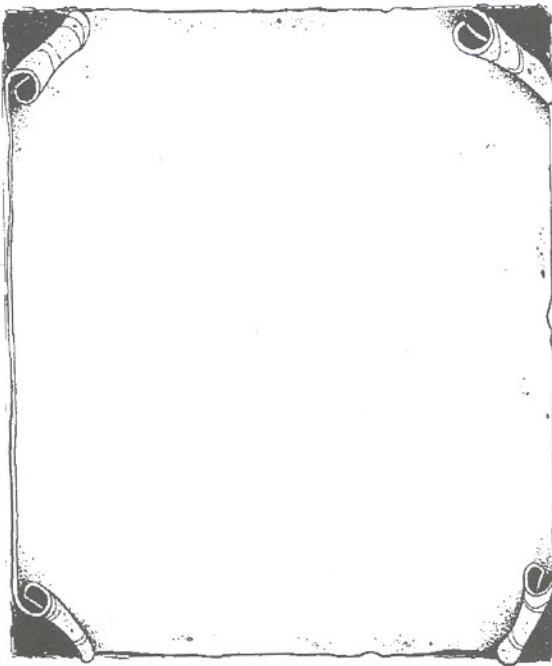
⑥ Thomas’ personality appeals to some and irritates some. List some of his positive and negative qualities from this passage.

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE

Which of these traits can you identify with?



- 7 Many times, like Thomas we have doubts and questions concerning our belief in Jesus. Jesus knew Thomas' deep questions. What may be yours? Why don't you bring them to Jesus himself, in prayer?



- 8 These are days where "seeing is believing." Yet, Jesus seems to ask more than that of us. He calls them really blessed, those who do not see yet believe! What may be some signs or experiences you have been insisting for? Which of these may you need to give up?