



S1.Lesson 7: Experience and Belief

Middle School Lesson Plans

Supplies Needed (somewhat time-intensive): Journals; tv or laptop to show movie clip (movie clip link is available at rfour.org/curriculum.html); Cooked cauliflower; a peeled tomato; 2 peeled grapes; 20 kernels of unpopped popcorn; 10 baby carrots; Spam; slightly soggy pretzel sticks; dried orange peels; 8 plastic containers to put the food in (without lids); 16 paper grocery bags

Set-up: Have each food (see list directly below) in a plastic container at the bottom of a grocery bag. Then put another grocery bag upside-down and over the top of the first bag so that the bottom of the 2nd bag is covering the top of the first bag. Then cut a square or hole into the bottom of the 2nd bag for the students to reach through. Write the name of the corresponding body part on the bag for identification purposes.

Food list and corresponding body part

- brains – (cooked cauliflower)
- heart - (peeled tomato)
- eyes - (peeled grapes)
- teeth - (un-popped popcorn)
- fingers (baby carrots)
- liver (slice Spam into a weird shape...or not...Spam in and of itself will be fine)
- soggy bones (stick pretzels and let them soak in water until they are still hard but a little bit soggy.)
- Dried skin (dried orange peels)

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING ACTIVITY - Guess The Food (warning – there's a little bit of a gross factor here - works well around/with Halloween)

TELL

The Story:

Our local grocery store was having a little fun for Halloween. They labeled some food as though the food were body parts. But now that it is not Halloween anymore, they want to call the food by its original name, but can't remember what the food was originally called. You might wonder, why not just throw the food away, right? Well, because they still want to sell it! They've had a couple of employees look in the bags and then pass out – apparently looking at the food is a traumatic event. Anyways, they're asking for our help to identify the food by TOUCH.

- I'm passing out to each of you right now a sheet with the names of the body parts the grocery store put on their food.
- You'll notice the bags also have the names of the body parts written on them.
- Go to a bag, put your hand in and feel the food.
- Then guess what the food is and put it next to the corresponding body part on your answer sheet.

DO Activity (do NOT SHOW or let the students SEE the food). After activity is done, STILL DO NOT SHOW the food to the students)

ASK

- Do you think what you felt was food or body parts or something else? (take a vote)
- Are you sure about your answers?
- If so, why are you so sure? How can you know?
- If you are not sure what it was that you were touching, what do you think would help you to know?

TELL

- We're going to read a story from the Bible from the Book of John, where the disciples try to identify the resurrected Jesus.

READ John 20:19-20, 24-29

19 It was Sunday evening – it had been more than 48 hours since Jesus had been crucified. The doors of the house where the disciples were meeting were locked for fear of the Pharisees. Then suddenly Jesus was standing among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 After Jesus said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they trusted that it was Jesus.

24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So later on, the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

26 A week later the disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut and locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." 28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

ASK

- If you had been Thomas, would you have believed your fellow disciples?
- Why?
- If you had been Thomas, would there have been another way that would've helped you believe that Jesus was risen, other than seeing him and his wounds?
- What might be some of those other ways for you?

TELL

- One way in which we come to understand or believe or trust someone/something is through our experiences.
- Experience is a physical gathering of information – can you name the five senses?
 - Touch, Sight, Hearing, Taste and Smell
- The disciples without Thomas had an experience of Resurrected Jesus – Thomas did not.

- Therefore Thomas did not believe.
- However, if we have enough experiences that consistently show us that someone/something is trustworthy, then it is easier for us to trust that person/thing
- In Thomas' case, he probably should've been more trusting due to his previous experiences with Jesus and the other disciples.
- But he wasn't because trust is a hard thing to come by.
- Now we're going to watch a video clip that shows an example of why trust can be such a difficult thing.

SHOW Indiana Jones: The Last Crusade movie clip

ASK

- Earlier in the film, Indiana's dad is shot (not shown) and is dying (why he's lying down talking to the ceiling). Indiana is now trying to get "The Holy Grail" as a way to save his father's life. With that in mind, do you think Indiana's stepping out into the "nothing" was trust or desperation?
- His dad at one point says, "C'mon Indy, take a leap of faith." Do you think it is easier to trust/"take a leap of faith" when someone is alongside/with you?
- After Indy takes the step, the path is more visible. Can you think of experiences where, once you've "jumped in," that then you can better "see" how it works?

TELL

- The invisible bridge illustrated pretty well how our relationship often works with God. God will call us to do something, and we may not be able to see why, but if we do it, then we will be better able to see why.
- And as we have more and more of these experiences with God, then our trust in God grows. And that's the good news for today!

If there's time...

- Let's take out the food items and see how good we were at using our sense of touch.

JOURNAL

--Brainstorm some ways in which you think you might be called right now to "experience" God/God's presence in your life.

CLOSING PRAYER