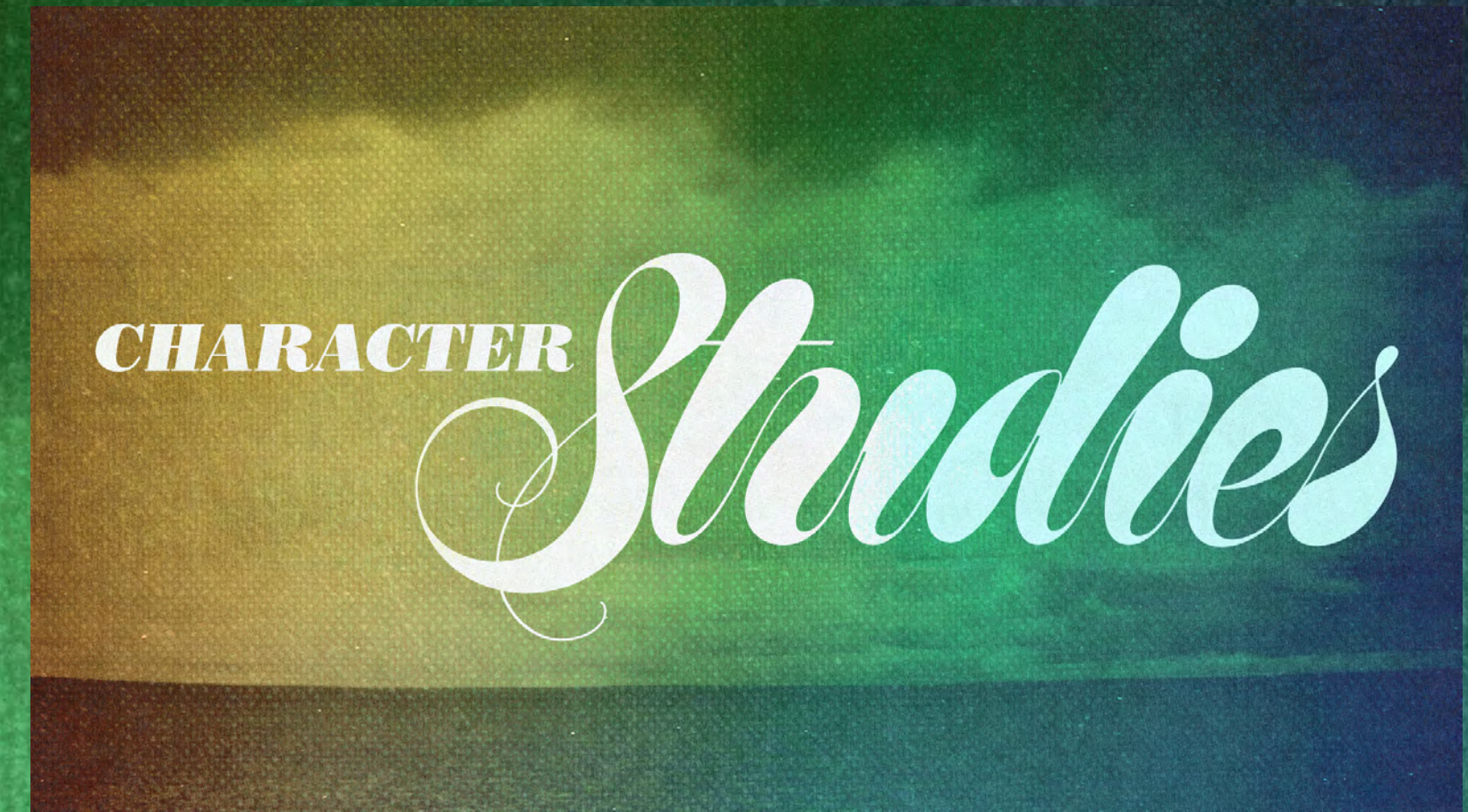




# Character Studies

Week 5

Thomas - Portrait of a Reflective Christian

Mark Petersburg — Reston Bible Church — Sunday, August 9, 2026

**Are you even after years of being a Christian ever struck by the unlikelihood of the whole thing?**

*Daniel Taylor, The Myth of Certainty*

**Does one minute it seem perfectly natural and acceptable that God exists and cares for the world, and the next – uncommonly naïve?**

*Daniel Taylor, The Myth of Certainty*

**Do you ever think those close to me would be shocked if they knew some of the doubts I have about my faith?**

*Daniel Taylor, The Myth of Certainty*

**How important is it for you to be certain about something before you act?**

*Daniel Taylor, The Myth of Certainty*

**Would it bother you more to be called a hypocrite or a cynic? Why?**

*Daniel Taylor, The Myth of Certainty*

**Most simple-minded evangelical Christians struggle only with unanswered questions. The reflective Christian struggles with unquestioned answers.**

*Chuck Swindoll*

**But when Jesus heard it he said, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”**

*John 11:4 ESV*

**The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?”**

*John 11:8 ESV*

**After saying these things, he said to them,  
“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go  
to awaken him.” The disciples said to him,  
“Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.”  
Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they  
thought that he meant taking rest in sleep.**

Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

*John 11:11-16 ESV*

**“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?”**

**And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.”**

*John 14:1-4 ESV*

**Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”**

*John 14:5 ESV*

**On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."**

**When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.**

*John 20:19-20 ESV*

**Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.**

*John 20:24 ESV*

**So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”**

*John 20:25 ESV*

**Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”**

*John 20:26 ESV*

**Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”**

*John 20:27 ESV*

**Thus far did I come laden with my sin,  
Nor could aught ease the grief that I was in,  
Till I came hither. What a place is this!**

**Must here be the beginning of my bliss!**

**Must here the burden fall from off my back!**

**Must here the strings that bound it to me  
crack!**

**Blest cross! Blest sepulcher! Blest rather be  
The man that there was put to shame for me!**

**1) Identify The Cause Or Source  
Of Your Doubt**

# My Humanness

**Ignorance**

I prayed for faith and thought that someday faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, "Now faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

**I had closed my Bible and prayed for faith. I  
now opened my Bible, and began to study,  
and faith has been growing ever since.**

*Dwight L. Moody*

# Projection

# Temperament

**Satan**

**Sin**



**Forgetfulness**

# Fluctuating Emotions

# Stages Of Life

# Exhaustion And Fatigue

- **Humanness**
- **Ignorance**
- **Projection**
- **Temperament**
- **Satan**

- **Unconfessed sin**
- **Forgetfulness**
- **Fluctuating emotions**
- **Stages of life**
- **Exhaustion or fatigue**

## **2) Ground Your Faith In Biblical Fact**

**And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.**

*Philippians 1:6 ESV*

**... For he (God) has said, “I will never leave  
you nor forsake you.”**

*Hebrews 13:5 ESV*

**There is therefore now no condemnation for  
those who are in Christ Jesus.**

*Romans 8:1 ESV*

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Romans 8:38-39 ESV*

**Lord, there are times when my experience is  
the experience of Thomas. There are days  
when I hear not the bells of Easter morn. I  
tread the road to Emmaus, and I meet not the  
risen Christ. I stand on the mountain of Galilee  
and there comes no voice among the reasons.**

**I sail on (the Sea of Galilee) and I see no vision. I frequent the upper room but there is no hint of His presence. My faith cannot walk by sight in hours like these. What shall I do at such times, O Lord? Hast Thou a remedy for the loss of light?**

**Yes, my Father, Thou hast a gate where faith  
can enter without seeing where it goes, and  
its name is Love. Lead me by that gate when  
my eyes dim. When I cannot follow Him to  
Olivet, let me worship Him on Calvary.**

**When betimes I lose sight of His risen form,  
do not shut me out from the bearing of His  
name. In the days when immortal hope is dim,  
make room in my heart for immortal memory.  
If I cannot soar with Him into heaven, let me  
at least go back to finish His work on earth.**

**Let me mourn with the Marthas whose  
Lazarus I cannot raise. Let me pray with the  
paralytics whose weakness I cannot cure. Let  
me sing to the sightless whose eyes I cannot  
open. And let me lend to the lepers the touch  
of a brother's hand.**

Let me find for the fallen a chance for them to  
renew their days. Then shall my Easter morn  
shine again through the clouds of night. Then  
shall I know the meaning of the words,  
“Blessed are they which have not seen... and  
yet believed.”

*George Matheson*

**3) Be Honest – With God  
And With Yourself**

**4) Doubt Your Doubts As Much  
As You Doubt Your Faith**

**5) Stay Connected**

## **6) Exercise The Principle Of Suspended Judgment**

**When a Christian comes to faith his understanding and his trust go hand in hand, but as he continues in faith his trust may sometimes be called to go on by itself without his understanding. This is where the principle of suspended judgment applies.**

**At such times if a Christian's faith is to be itself and let God be God, it must suspend judgment and say, "Father I do not understand you, but I trust you."**

Notice what this means. A Christian does not say, "I do not understand you at all, but I trust you anyway." Rather he says, "I do not understand you *in this situation*, but *I understand why I trust you anyway*. Therefore, I can trust that you understand even though I don't."

So the principle of suspended judgment is not irrational. It is not a leap of faith but a walk of faith. As believers we cannot always know why, but *we can always know why we trust God who knows why*, and this makes all the difference....

Face to face with mystery, and especially the mystery of evil, the faith that understands why it has come to trust must trust where it has not come to understand. Faith does not know why in terms of the *immediate*, but it knows why it trusts God who knows why in terms of the *ultimate*.

Os Guinness

Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

*John 20:28-29 ESV*

Though you have not seen Him, you love Him,  
and though you do not see Him now, but  
believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy  
inexpressible and full of glory.

*1 Peter 1:8 NASB*

I think the trouble with me is *lack of faith*. I have no *rational* ground for going back on the arguments that convinced me of God's existence:

but the irrational deadweight of my old skeptical habits, and the spirit of this age, and the cares of the day, steal away all my lively feeling of the truth, and often when I pray I wonder if I am not posting letters to a non-existent address.

**Mind you I don't *think* so – the whole of my  
reasonable mind is convinced: but I often *feel*  
so.**

However, there is nothing to do but to peg away. One falls so often that it hardly seems worth while picking oneself up and going through the farce of starting over again as if you could ever hope to walk. Still, this seeming absurdity is the only sensible thing I do, so I must continue it.

*C.S. Lewis*

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