



LESSON

IS IT OKAY THAT I SOMETIMES DOUBT GOD?

TODAY'S

BIBLE BASE

Bold Bible Truth **GOD LOVES US.**

(John 3:16)

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. Don’t be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil.”
(Proverbs 3:5-7)

- **John the Baptist doubted Jesus was the Messiah.**
Matthew 11:2-6
- **Elijah doubted God was with him.**
Habakkuk 1:2
- **Thomas doubted Jesus rose from the dead.**
John 20:25, 27

Create a Bold Classroom Environment

Reading the BE BOLD Values aloud reassures your preteens this is a safe place to share their thoughts, their feelings, and even their doubts.

Pray for Your Preteens

Left unaddressed, doubt can drive a wedge between your preteens and God. Ask God to give your kids the courage to acknowledge any doubts they have and to bring those doubts to God. And pray that your preteens find both your classroom *and* church are safe places to bring doubts and questions. Write your prayer here.



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Just for Teachers

When they were younger, your preteens believed whatever any trusted adult told them. Now that they’re able to think more abstractly, they question... consider...and doubt. But when doubt leads to investigation and then on to truth, it’s a good thing. Today you’ll help your preteens discover what to do when they find themselves doubting God.

THIS LESSON AT A GLANCE



Section	What Preteens Do	Supplies	Easy Prep
Begin Boldly (about 10 minutes)	Enjoy a snack, review BE BOLD Values, report on Mystery Missions, and add questions to the whiteboard/poster paper.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BE BOLD Values poster • snacks • toothpicks • mini-marshmallows • whiteboard or poster paper and markers 	
Game (about 5 minutes)	Play I Doubt It and discover doubt can be good or bad; it depends what they do with it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • book of matches 	
Question of the Week (about 20 minutes)	Dig into Scripture to meet three Hall-of-Fame Doubters to see how doubt can lead to a deeper faith in God.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bold Action Student Books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tear out pages 1-3 from Bold Action Student Books.
Bold Action (about 20 minutes)	Create Doubters Hall of Fame medals to remind them how to deal with doubt.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bold Action Student Books • dessert-size paper plates • ballpoint pens • heavy-duty aluminum foil • transparent tape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rip off sheets of foil big enough to cover plates—one sheet per preteen.
Bold Blessing (about 5 minutes)	Receive a prayer blessing and a Mystery Mission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mystery Mission Cards • Mystery Mission Stickers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fold a Mystery Mission Card for each preteen and use three Mystery Mission Stickers to seal each card.



BEGIN BOLDLY (ABOUT 10 MINUTES)

Arrival Activity

Greet preteens warmly as they arrive. Enjoy a snack together.

Provide a stack of toothpicks and bags of mini-marshmallows, and ask kids to build any animal they want to build. But no eating the supplies!

As they work, wander around admiring their efforts. Entering into these casual conversations helps preteens relax and relate to you.

When you're ready to move on, put away the snacks and building supplies.

Welcome Kids

Say: **Thanks for being here today! I can tell from your sculptures that you know a lot about animals...and that's going to come in handy in a few minutes.**

But first, a quick reminder about how we do things here...

Point out the BE BOLD Values poster and read it aloud to kids.

You're accepted just as you are.

We respect each other's thoughts and struggles.

We're all in this together.

God is here, ready to be your friend because you matter!

Mystery Mission Reports

Say: **Each time we get together you get a Mystery Mission. Let's report on how those missions have gone. On my last Mystery Mission...**

Briefly share what happened on your last mission, and then ask kids to share with the larger group what happened on their last missions.

Question Collection

Say: **Thanks for sharing those stories! Today we're talking about this...**

Write on the board: Doubt.

❓ **How would you define that word? What does it mean when someone has doubts?**

Allow several kids to respond and affirm all answers.

Say: **Thanks for sharing.**

Now let's talk about how doubt plays out for us when it comes to church, the Bible, even God. Where does doubt show up there?

Maybe there's something you think you're supposed to believe, but you don't really believe it. Maybe there's something you've been told about God or Jesus, but you're not so sure.

One doubt I sometimes have is this...

Briefly own up to a doubt you have. Be age-appropriate in what you share, but be honest, too. Write your doubt on the board.

Ask kids to call out their own doubts. Write those doubts on the board, or have kids write their doubts.

Say: **Having doubts is part of life and can actually be helpful.**

If you see an ad promising that new, expensive shoes will make you an all-pro soccer player—doubt it. If a friend says putting a math book under your pillow as you sleep will help you ace the next test without studying, doubt that, too.

Though it would be cool if that worked!

Doubt isn't all bad, but it's not all good, either. It all depends on what you do with it.

So today, we're going to explore this question: Is it okay that I sometimes doubt God? But first, let's have a little warm-up. Let's give your doubt muscles a workout!



PRETEEN POINTER

It's easy to panic when we hear preteens doubting that God exists; we fear they're falling away from the faith. But our fear isn't helpful. What *does* help is our asking those kids to explain what they're thinking and feeling, then walking with them through their doubt.



PRETEEN POINTER

Find something positive in each response, letting kids build their own working definition of "doubt." Any definition that includes the idea of uncertainty and questioning works!



GAME (ABOUT 5 MINUTES)

I Doubt It

Explain you'll be sharing 10 facts about animals. Some facts will be true and some will be false. If preteens agree with a fact, they're to stand up and roar like lions. If they doubt a fact, they'll stay seated and meow like kittens.

Following are the 10 facts—and answers. To keep the game moving quickly, don't stop for discussion after each fact. Just read the fact and remind kids what to do if they believe the fact or doubt it. Pause as kids respond, then supply the answer and move on to the next fact.

Say: **First fact: Koala bear fingerprints are almost exactly like human fingerprints. If you think that's true, stand and roar. Don't think it's true, sit and meow. Go!** Pause as kids respond.

It's true. So next time you do something wrong, do it at the zoo! Everyone sit and get ready for the next question. Repeat the process with the following facts.

Fact 2: A snail can sleep for up to three years. (True.)

Fact 3: Elephants can't jump. (True.)

Fact 4: A bee can sting you once and then the bee dies. (False—it depends on the kind of bee.)

Fact 5: About 3 percent of ice in the Antarctic is made of penguin pee. (True.)

Fact 6: Owls don't have eyeballs. (True—their eyes are actually tubes instead of rounded balls.)

Fact 7: Fruit flies have a hidden eyeball under one wing. (False.)

Fact 8: An adult Chinese Horned Hucklebunny can hop more than 2 feet per bound. (False—no such animal.)

Fact 9: Under all that white fur, polar bears have black skin. (True.)

Fact 10: Vultures can't sweat. (True—when they're too hot, they pee on themselves to cool off.)

Bonus round! Eagle nests can weigh up to 2 tons. (True—one that size was found in Florida.)

Quickly ask if anyone got all the answers right—or wrong.

? **What made this game either hard or easy for you?**

Allow several responses.

Say: **If I'd given you the chance to look online, you'd have nailed all of those animal challenges. Sometimes you can take away doubt by just checking facts.**

But what about doubts that you can't make go away by looking things up? What do you do with doubts like that? What do you do with doubts you might have about God?

Hold up a match and light it.

Say: **Doubt is like this tiny flame. It can start a campfire to keep you warm on a cold evening. It can save your life.**

Or it can burn down your house.

Blow out the match.

Say: **GOD LOVES US even when we doubt. His love is bigger than any questions we have. And doubt isn't necessarily good or bad—it's just doubt. But what we do with doubt can help us or hurt us.**

Let's discover what to do with doubt by meeting a few doubters. Doubters who were such doubters that they made the Doubters Hall of Fame!



QUESTION OF THE WEEK (ABOUT 20 MINUTES)

Distribute pages 1-3 from Bold Action Student Books to each preteen. Then have preteens form pairs.

Explain that having doubts about God isn't anything new—there are even people in the Bible who had doubts.

Say: **But the people you'll meet didn't just *stay* doubters. They *did* something with their doubt—and we can learn a lot about what to do with our own doubt by spending some time with them.**

Elijah

Say: **First up in the Doubters Hall of Fame is a prophet of God by the name of Elijah. Elijah had been working hard for God, but now he was at a low point. He felt alone. Discouraged. Depressed. And afraid.**

Listen to what the Bible says: “Elijah was afraid and fled for his life...Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. ‘I have had enough, Lord. Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died’ ” (1 Kings 19:3-4).

Elijah was done. He had no confidence left. No strength. But God didn't get angry with Elijah for feeling that way—God answered him, in a surprising way. God said, “Go out and stand before me on the mountain.” As Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. Rocks were torn from the mountain, but God wasn't in the wind (1 Kings 19:11).

Read along with me what happened next. It's on page 1 of your Bold Action Student Book.

Read (or have a willing preteen read) the passage under “The Prophet Elijah: Doubter” on page 1 of the Bold Action Student Book. Then ask pairs to discuss the first question following the passage. After pairs talk, invite them to share what they discovered.



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PRETEEN POINTER

There are no “right” answers to the questions you're about to ask, so invite a lot of responses. Your kids are sorting through how to own their faith in real time—what an honor to help them along the way!

Say: **Thanks for sharing! God let Elijah know he wasn't alone and gave him support and guidance. God's gentle whisper was more powerful than all of Elijah's negative thoughts. I don't know about you, but sometimes the negative thoughts rolling around in my brain sound so loud and confusing. But those negatives aren't from God. God's gentle whisper can cut right through our doubts and fears.**

You know, a whisper is a special message. It's usually from a friend or loved one, meant for your ears only. Ask pairs to discuss the second question following the passage. After pairs talk, invite them to share what they discovered.

Say: **Like Elijah, you need to be listening for God's voice. You need to be quiet enough to hear his whisper. Maybe you could pray, or read God's Word, or just spend quiet time listening for God. And you can remind yourself that God's whisper is more powerful than your negative thoughts and feelings.**

John the Baptist

Say: **Next up in the Doubters Hall of Fame is John the Baptist.**

John had been preaching and baptizing people, telling them to repent because the promised Messiah was coming. In fact, John is the one who baptized Jesus and heard God's voice say Jesus is his Son! But later, John was thrown in prison. While he sat there, month after month, he questioned: Was Jesus *really* the promised Messiah? He knew the Messiah would heal the blind, deaf, and lame, and Jesus had done that. But John began to doubt.

So John sent friends to ask Jesus if he really was the Messiah. Uh-oh—John's questioning the Son of God? Let's see how Jesus responded.

Read aloud—or have a willing preteen read aloud—the passage under “John the Baptist: Doubter.”

Then ask pairs to discuss the question following the passage and, after pairs talk, invite them to share what they discovered.

Say: **Thanks for your insights. Jesus didn't get mad at John. He loved John and understood what he was going through in prison. It's the same with us—**GOD LOVES US** even when we doubt. He understands what we're going through.**

Thomas

Say: **Our third Hall-of-Fame Doubter is one of Jesus' disciples: Thomas.**

After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to his disciples—but Thomas wasn't there. When Thomas heard what had happened, he doubted. He said, “I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side” (John 20:25).

Later, Jesus stopped by again. He looked at Thomas and said, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!” (John 20:27).

Then Jesus said something that was sort of about us. Let's hear what that was.

Read (or have a willing preteen read) the passage under “Disciple Thomas: Doubter” and, after pairs talk, invite them to share what they discovered.

Say: **From what I see in these three examples, God doesn't get angry when we doubt. Hall-of-Fame Doubters have this in common: They're honest about their doubts. You were honest when you wrote your doubts on the board. Way to go!**

Like Elijah and John the Baptist, they bring their honest doubts to God. They check in with God and listen when God talks to them.

Like Thomas, they talk with other Christians about their doubts so their friends can help them understand.

And, like all of the Hall-of-Famers, they stick with it. They don't walk away from God because of a few doubts. Because God doesn't walk away from us because of doubts, either.

We know for certain that GOD LOVES US even when we doubt. And that's a very good thing!

So let's summarize: Hall-of-Fame Doubters do three things:

- 1. They check in with God.**
- 2. They talk with other Christians who can help them.**
- 3. They stick with God.**

When they do all that, their doubt leads to a stronger faith in God.

That's true for our Hall-of-Fame Doubters, and it's true for us. As I believe you're all going to do those same three things, I'm thinking you have what it takes to be in the Doubters Hall of Fame.

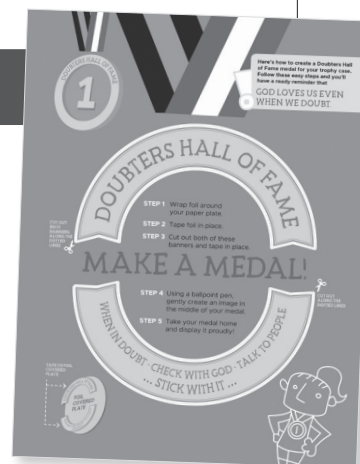
All you need are reminder medals...which you're about to make right now!

BOLD ACTION (ABOUT 20 MINUTES)

Kids will create personalized Hall-of-Fame medals out of dessert-size paper plates, aluminum foil, ballpoint pens, transparent tape, and banners from their Bold Action Student Books (page 3). They'll take their medals home to display in their personal space as reminders of what to do when they doubt.

Deciding to deal with doubts—that's a bold action. It's a step that many older people are afraid to take.

And here's who your kids will serve as they take this step: They'll serve God, whose deep desire is to have a growing friendship with your preteens. It's a relationship that can be quickly curtailed if a doubt takes hold that kids don't let surface and discuss with him and others.



As your kids create their medals and you bless them, be praying for your preteens. Other than sharing the Gospel message with your preteens, the news that doubt doesn't have to derail their faith is one of the most important messages you could help a preteen hear.



BOLD BLESSING (ABOUT 5 MINUTES)

Pray

Have kids switch medals with one another. Explain they'll be praying for the person who made the medal they're holding.

Pray: **God, you're both good and powerful.**

You're more powerful than any doubts we may have today, or will have in the future.

We pray for the person whose medal we hold. Give that person courage to come to you with doubts, to listen to you, to talk with other Christians, and to stick with you.

Please silently pray for the person whose medal you hold. I'll finish our prayer shortly.

Allow 20 seconds of silence and then continue.

Thank you, God. We love you.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Ask kids to return medals to the people who made them.

Send-Off Cheer

Have kids stand in a circle with their hands in the center, like a sports team heading into the championship. Tell kids when you finish the Bold Blessing, they're to raise their medals to the sky and shout "Let's be bold!"

Say the Bold Blessing: **Receive this Bold Blessing: May you be bold coming to God with your doubts. May you be bold talking with other Christians about your doubts. May you always stick with God, despite your doubts. May you be bold, you children of God. Say it with me...Let's be bold!**

Mystery Mission

Say: **We discovered that GOD LOVES US even when we doubt. We also discovered we can bring our doubts to God. We know that...but not everyone does.**

There's a hint of what's waiting for you as you join Jesus on a Mystery Mission between now and the time we get together again. Don't open this card until you get home!

We'll talk about what happened next time you come.

Distribute a Mystery Mission Card to each preteen. Take your own card home and complete the challenge, too!

