



APPEARANCES TO THE DISCIPLES

- Step I** Read the passage [Jn 20:19–29](#) carefully two or three times.
- Step II** Read the sections of the gospel text that come before and after this passage to find its *context*—what has happened just before this passage and what happens afterwards/
- Step III** Now look at the passage as closely and in as much detail as you possibly can. These are the kinds of detailed questions you might ask yourself:
1. Where were the disciples gathered? What time of day? Which day of the week? What is significant about the ‘first’ day of the week in Christian scripture?
 2. Why were the doors closed? What does this tell you about the feelings of the disciples?
 3. Why would the disciples be afraid of ‘the Jews’ when they were Jews themselves and Jesus was a Jew? What particular ‘Jews’ might they have been afraid of?
 4. Look at the words John uses to indicate Jesus’ presence among the disciples. Since it was especially noted that the doors were closed, what kind of presence of Jesus is implied?
 5. Jesus greets his disciples with simple words. Note what they are. Would that be a common greeting in the time of Jesus? Where do you hear it nowadays?
 6. How might the disciples have felt face to face with the one they had abandoned, and in Peter’s case denied three times?
 7. Why does Jesus show them his hands and side? What kind of presence do these words imply?
 8. What effect does this have on the disciples? (Think: what effect might this have on you?)
 9. The disciples have failed Jesus badly and we would probably expect him to reproach them but what does he actually say to them? What is he sending them to do?
 10. How is the Holy Spirit given to the disciples? Has the Holy Spirit been important in the gospel of John? What connections can you make between this moment and other references to the [Spirit](#) in the gospel?
 11. Why might Jesus have used the symbol of breathing upon the disciples as his way of filling them with his Spirit? (Hint: Try to think of other places in scripture that speak of being [breathed](#) upon.) What light does the very first mention of ‘breathing’ in scripture cast on Jesus’ action?



12. What extraordinary capacity is Jesus extending to his disciples here? (Hint: Who can forgive sins and bring peace?)
13. Who were the 'Twelve'? which disciple missed the first experience of the risen Jesus? What was his response to the news? How is Thomas like us? What proof does he demand?
14. How long is it before the disciples regather? What day of the week does this make it again? (N.B. Days were counted inclusively.)
15. Jesus invites Thomas to touch his wounds and believe. What is the significance of Jesus' **wounds** in John? What is Thomas's response?
16. Some scholars feel that Chapter 21 of John's gospel is **a later addition**. If so, the words of Thomas's confession of faith are almost the last words of the gospel. In what way do they match the very first words of the gospel?

A similar appearance of the Risen Jesus to the disciples is also recorded in Luke (Lk 24:36–43). Look at the **parallel** account in Luke, and note the differences and similarities.

Step IV Now that you have carefully considered these ten verses of the gospel:

1. What do they tell us about Jesus? What does John want us to understand about his identity?
2. How would you describe the relationship between Jesus, his Father and the Spirit shown in this extract?
3. How do his disciples respond to him? what is he expecting of them?

Step V Carefully consider the meaning of this text for us:

1. How does it help us understand who Jesus is?
2. What does it reveal about the disciples?
3. What does it reveal about our own experiences as disciples of Jesus now?

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