

Christian Book Summaries



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twelve ordinary men

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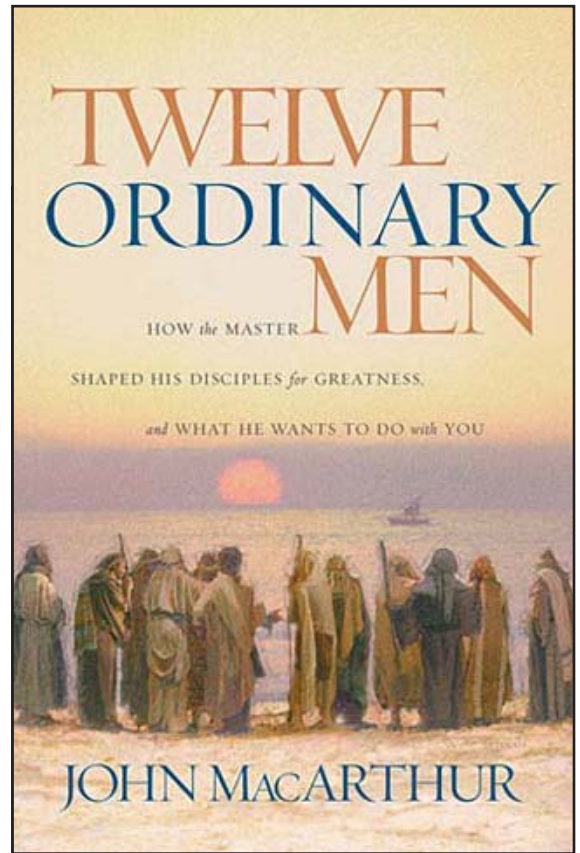
A Quick Focus

The Book's Purpose

- Emphasize the ordinary personalities and characteristics of the disciples
- Show how extraordinary they became because of time spent with Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit
- Encourage ordinary people like you and me to believe that we can also be transformed by the Spirit of Christ into believers fit for the Master's use

The Book's Message

The disciples had faults and character flaws. They were incredibly ordinary~ just like you and me. Yet these men were transformed and are still influencing the world today. God delights in using the ordinary for His extraordinary purposes. To Him alone is the praise and glory!



by John MacArthur

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twelve ordinary men

“Those men were merely instruments in His hands~ just as you and I can be God’s instruments today. God delights to use such ordinary means.”

They were ordinary in every way. Not one of these men was a scholar. They were not orators or theologians. Their natural talents and intellectual abilities were in no way outstanding. They were prone to failure~none more so than Peter, the leader. Jesus even stated that they were slow learners and spiritually dense (Luke 24:25). Yet, after little more than eighteen months of training, they changed the world. **“...the ultimate success of the strategy actually depended on the Holy Spirit working in those men to accomplish His sovereign will. It was a mission that could not be thwarted. That’s why it was a work for which God alone deserves praise and glory.”**

Who were these men? The New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts list the same twelve apostles. The twelve are arranged into three groups of four men. The first group mentioned always includes Peter, Andrew, James, and John~and Peter is always named first. The lists appear to indicate, in descending order, the intimacy of each apostle’s relationship with Christ. Group one was likely the first called and, therefore, had been with Him the longest. They were His trusted inner circle. 

peter the apostle with the foot-shaped mouth

Matthew 10:2 states, “Now the names of the twelve Apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter.” The Greek word in this verse is *protos*. This “first” is not referring to the first in line; it is referring to the leader or chief. Simon Peter was the spokesman and leader of the disciples. Even his names~*Simon* and *Peter*~were symbolic of his leadership and what he went through in preparation for that role.

Simon was a very common name. His birth-name was Simon Bar-Jonah, meaning “Simon, son of Jonah.” Jesus gave him the additional name of *Peter*. It is important to note that Jesus did not name him Peter instead of Simon; He named him Peter in addition to his birth-name, Simon. This disciple was sometimes referred to as Simon, at other times as Peter, and still other times as Simon Peter. When each name was used, it was used intentionally.

Simon became symbolic of the old nature. The old nature of this young man was impulsive and overly eager. When Jesus wanted to indicate to Simon Peter that he was sinning in action, word, or attitude, He referred to him as *Simon*.

Peter means *rock*. (*Petros* is a Greek word meaning “a piece of rock, a stone.”) This nickname was a constant reminder to Simon Peter of who Jesus wanted him to become. When He called him Peter (Rock), he was communicating, “You are behaving as you should behave.”

It is said that leaders are born with specific innate gifts that need to be molded into true leadership ability~Simon Peter was a perfect example. In his life, we see three important ingredients that reside in an effective leader: the right raw material, the right life experiences, and the right character qualities.

Raw Material

- **Inquisitiveness:** Curiosity is an important element of leadership. Leaders are hungry for answers. According to the gospel, Peter asked more questions than the other eleven combined.

- **Initiative:** Drive, ambition, and energy are important components of effective leadership. Leaders make things happen. We often hear Peter

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PETER~THE APOSTLE WITH THE FOOT-SHAPED MOUTH

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speak boldly, as seen in Matthew 16:13–16. When Jesus asks, “Who do men say I, the Son of Man, am?” Several ideas are expressed. Then Jesus asks, “But who do *you* say I am?” Peter boldly and decisively asserts, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Peter was always ready to take hold of every opportunity~a characteristic of a natural leader.

- **Involvement:** Leaders are most comfortable in the middle of the action piloting others in the right direction. In the story of Peter and the boat (Matthew 14:26–28), while the others wondered if they were seeing a ghost, Peter said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” Jesus said, “Come.” And out Peter went. While Peter’s lack of faith is often criticized, the fact is, he got out of the boat! He had to be with Jesus in the center of the action.

Life Experiences

Peter had the raw material to be a good leader and Jesus provided life experiences~often dramatic and painful~to refine his leadership style. He enjoyed great victories and suffered devastating and humiliating defeats. In Matthew 16:17, Jesus calls him “blessed” and promises him “the keys to the kingdom.” A few verses later (v.23) he receives the harshest rebuke by Jesus ever recorded, “Get behind me, Satan!”

Character Qualities

Character is what makes excellent leadership possible. “**Character produces respect. Respect produces trust. And trust motivates followers.**” Christ was the perfect example of a true leader. The primary goal of spiritual leadership is to guide others to Christlikeness. Through his relationship with Christ, Peter developed the qualities he needed to become a great leader.

The character qualities of all truly great leaders include:

- **Submission:** A true leader is an example to his or her followers~including an example of submission. A true spiritual leader provides an example by submitting to the Lord and to those in authority, as instructed in Scripture. The raw material within Peter motivated him to dominate every situation. Jesus taught him submission (Matthew 1).

- **Restraint:** Self-control, discipline, moderation, and reserve are key leadership characteristics. Restraint was sometimes a humiliating and painful thing for Peter to internalize. The Lord worked on him constantly in this regard. In the garden, Jesus even rebuked Peter in front of the enemy! But Peter learned a powerful lesson that allowed him to later write, “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps. Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth; Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:21–23).

- **Humility:** Leaders are often lured into the sin of pride. When those they lead constantly praise and admire them, it is all too easy to begin to think more of themselves than they should. And so it was with Peter (Matthew 26). Peter responded to Jesus with words of total grandiosity; he would NEVER be made to stumble this night. Yet, not once, but three times he stumbled and had to face his own failure and shame~a painful lesson!

- **Love:** True spiritual leaders lovingly serve others rather than selfishly demand others to serve them. In the Upper Room, Jesus supplied a profound example of His words, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant to all” (Mark 9:35). On that night, Jesus took

the role of a servant and washed the disciples’ feet~a task reserved for only the lowliest of servants. To the disciples, who had previously spent time arguing about who was the greatest, He provided a lesson of humility and genuine love.

- **Compassion:** In their raw state, leaders tend to lack compassion and overflow with impatience. To correct this in Peter, Jesus decided to allow Satan to work on him. Indicating Peter’s carnal behavior through the name he used, Jesus said, “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31–32). When this trial was complete, Peter was ready to empathize with the weaknesses of others.

- **Courage:** A true spiritual leader does not have the wild “jump in without thinking” type of courage that fueled Peter to slice off the ear of Malchus. A true leader’s courage is “**a mature, settled, intrepid willingness to suffer for Christ’s sake.**” Simon’s courage was weak and unstable, but once filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter stood tall. He had witnessed Christ’s resurrection and had acquired the necessary rock-solid courage to persevere. He was absolutely secure in Christ.

Simon had the raw material. Simon Peter endured life and character-building experiences. Peter became a true leader.

“Peter’s life could be summed up in the final words of his second epistle: ‘Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ’ (2 Peter 3:18). That is exactly what Simon Peter did, and that is why he became Rock~the great leader of the early church.”

andrew

the apostle of small things

Andrew was the first disciple to be called. He had a very close relationship with Christ and, when others wanted to personally meet the Master, it was Andrew who brought them. He is responsible for introducing his dominant older brother, Peter, to Christ. He was the least known of the four disciples in the lead group. Andrew stayed very much in the background, wanting primarily to lead other individuals to Christ.

All being fishermen, Peter and Andrew had probably known James and John for most of their lives. They had much in common, including spiritual interests, since all had been followers of John the Baptist. All four had the raw material of leadership~so much so that they were known to argue over who was the greatest. Of the four, Andrew was the least conspicuous. He lived his life in the shadow of his dominant brother; many verses mention him as Peter's brother as if that was his only significance. Yet, there is nothing that implies that he resented Peter's dominance. He did not need to be the center of attention. He was content to use his gifts to further the word of God and was at peace with others doing the same.

Of the inner circle, Andrew seemed naturally the least combative and the most thoughtful, but do not mistake this for weakness. The name Andrew means "manly" and manly he was. He was a fisherman, an occupation that required physical strength. He was deliberate, bold, and decisive. Andrew and John were present when Jesus was baptized and heard John the Baptist say, "Behold the lamb of God!" (John 1:35-36). They immediately left to follow Jesus. Andrew and John began to be taught by Jesus that very day. Shortly after, he brought Peter to Jesus. He willingly stayed in the background, which gave him a perspective the others in the lead group often lacked.

Andrew had an amazing ability to see the value of small, modest things such as:

- **Individual people:** He appreciated the value of a single soul. Both Andrew and Peter were evangelists, but their styles were dramatically different. Peter preached at Pentecost and 3,000 were converted. While Andrew never appeared to have preached to the crowds, it is important to remember that it was Andrew who brought Peter to the Lord; therefore, the fruit of Peter's ministry was also the fruit of Andrew's ministry.
- **Insignificant gifts:** While the other disciples were convinced that the best way to handle the hungry multitude was to send them to the village to buy food, it was Andrew who said, "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish" (John 6:9). He identified to Jesus an available food source. With it, Jesus fed the people and had food left over. Andrew knew that no gift is insignificant in the hands of Jesus.
- **Inconspicuous service:** Unlike his brother and friends, Andrew was more interested in bringing individual souls to Jesus than in being given the credit for doing so. Being hidden in the background was not a problem as long as the work was being done.

"And Andrew's legacy is the example he left to show us that in effective ministry it's often the little things that count~the individual people, the insignificant gifts, and the inconspicuous service. God delights to use such things..."

james

the apostle of passion

Boanerges~ "Sons of Thunder" was the nickname Jesus gave to the brothers, James and John. James, the eldest, was zealous, passionate, fervent, and thunderous. He was also ambitious and bloodthirsty. **"...James sometimes had a tendency to let such misguided zeal get the better of him."**

We see this misguided zeal in Luke 9:51-56 when James wanted to call down fire from heaven and in Matthew 20:20-24 when James and John enlisted their mother to ask Jesus to allow them, when they enter His Kingdom, to sit on the thrones at His sides. Jesus gently reminded them there would be suffering before glory and that those thrones were in God's hands. **"To sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give. But it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father"** (Matthew 20:23).

"James wanted a crown of glory; Jesus gave him a cup of suffering. He wanted power; Jesus gave him servanthood. He wanted a place of prominence; Jesus gave him a martyr's grave. He wanted to rule; Jesus gave him a sword~not to wield, but to be the instrument of his own execution." James became the first disciple to die for his faith.

James met Jesus and, by the grace of God, was transformed into one of the leading apostles~a true man of God!

john

the apostle of love

John, the younger brother of James was zealous, passionate, fervent, and thunderous~just like his brother. How did this man become known as “the apostle of love?” John wrote more about love than any other New Testament author. He focused on Christ’s love for His church, a Christian’s love for Christ, and the sign of true believers~love for one another.

John learned love from Christ. The raw material of the passionate young disciple became the tender heart of the elder apostle.

“He’s an amazing example of what should happen to us as we grow in Christ~allowing the Lord’s strength to be made perfect in our weakness.”

Love did not weaken John’s passion for truth. Truth remained John’s passion to the end of his life, but the love he learned from Christ gave him the necessary balance that enabled him to proclaim truth to his last day on earth. He learned:

- **The balance of love and truth**~John wrote, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4). He used the Greek word for *truth* twenty-five times in his Gospel and another twenty times in his epistles. In his early years, truth was “it.” He had no concept of love by which to balance this zeal. Then, in Mark 9, we see him confess to dealing with a man who was driving out demons in Christ’s name by telling him to stop. This showed intolerance~rebuking the man for using Jesus’ name because he wasn’t part of the group. Jesus corrects him, “Do not stop him. No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us” (verses 39-40). With this, John began to transform~to understand the need for balance between love and truth. **“The truly godly person must cultivate both virtues in equal proportions...Know the truth, and uphold it in love.”**

- **The balance of ambition and humility**~We see the ambition of James and John when they enlisted their mother to request that they sit on the thrones to the right and left of Jesus (Mark 10:35-37). After all they had seen and heard in Jesus’ presence, this was audacious~pure unbridled ambition. Jesus had more than once explained that the highest positions in the kingdom were reserved for the most humble of those on earth. His Gospel shows that John did learn this balance.

“The apostle John refuses to speak of himself in reference to himself. Instead, he speaks of himself in reference to Jesus. He never paints himself in the foreground as a hero, but uses every reference to himself to honor Christ.”

- **The balance of suffering and glory**~John wanted glory and to avoid suffering. He had seen the full glory of Christ during His transfiguration and was promised that he would share in that glory (Matthew 19:28-29). But, true of us all, he did not relish the thought of suffering. We see this when he and the others fled the night Jesus’ was arrested (Mark 14:20). John learned, through his experiences with Jesus, that suffering is the price and prelude to glory. Jesus made it clear that before any of the disciples would receive a throne, they must “drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with” (Mark 10:38).

John had learned his lessons well~so well in fact that Jesus entrusted him with the care of His own mother. **“... in loving John, Jesus transformed him into a different man~a man who modeled the same kind of love Jesus had shown him.”**

CBS

philip

the bean counter

Since Philip was listed fifth on all four biblical lists of the twelve apostles, it implies that he was the leader of the second group of four. He seems to have a minor role when compared to Peter, Andrew, James, and John; but he was, nevertheless, a distinct character. The Gospel of John provides the only substantial picture of Philip. John makes it clear that Philip was a completely different kind of person than the first four.

Philip’s character includes descriptions such as pessimistic, pragmatic, and cynical. Yet, he was called by Jesus. The day after He called Andrew, John, and Peter, he went to Galilee, found Philip, and said to him, “Follow Me” (John 1:43). Philip had been studying the law and the prophets~he was seeking the Messiah. He had been in the wilderness with John the Baptist and his heart was open and ready. **continued on page 6**

“He knew the Old Testament promises. He was ready. He was expectant. His heart was prepared. And he received Jesus gladly, unhesitatingly, as Messiah.”

His heart was prepared and he followed Jesus without question, but he also had weak faith. We see this in John 6 when it was time to feed the multitude. Jesus asked Philip, **“Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat? He asked this only to test him, for He already had in mind what He was going to do”** (John 6:5-6). Philip fulfilled the role of the administrator within the group of disciples. It was more than likely his job to make all arrangements for meals and shelter. So Jesus took this opportunity to test him. Would he~true to his personality~conclude that this could not be done? Or, would he have faith in the power of Jesus? **“He *should* have said, ‘Lord, if You want to feed them, feed them. I’m just going to stand back and watch how You do it...’ That would have been the right response. But Philip was convinced it simply couldn’t be done. The limitless supernatural power of Christ had completely escaped his thinking.”**

Andrew, who was near, mentioned a boy who had five barley loaves and two small fish. Philip had lost an incredible opportunity~the opportunity to see faith rewarded. Previously, Jesus had taught them, “If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you” (Matthew 17:20). Philip had not considered this. His nature was to be materialistic, pragmatic, and realistic. He needed to learn **“to lay hold of the supernatural potential of faith.”**

Another example of Philip’s character took place in the Upper Room. It had not occurred to the disciples to pick up the basin and wash the feet of Jesus. It seemed that nothing they had been taught had sunk in. **“This was true of Philip in particular. Of all the foolish, impetuous, heartbreakingly ignorant statements that occasionally escaped the lips of the disciples, none was more disappointing than Philip’s remark in the Upper Room.”**

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). After all the time they had spent with Him, His meaning should certainly have been clear. He went on to say, “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him” (v.7). How could He have said it any clearer? He is God. Yet, Philip replies, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us’ (v.8). **“For three years Philip had gazed into the very face of God, and it still was not clear to him.”**

Philip, like the rest of the disciples, had limited ability, weak faith, and imperfect understanding. **“But Jesus said, ‘He’s exactly what I’m looking for. My strength is made perfect in weakness.’”** Jesus made him into a preacher and one of the founders of the Church. He promised to write Philip’s name on one of the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem. **“Thankfully, the Lord uses people like Philip~lots of them.”**



nathanael

the guileless one

Nathanael, called *Bartholomew* in the lists of the twelve, was Philip’s closest companion. There is little information about the background, character, or personality of Nathanael. We know that Nathanael was brought to Jesus immediately after Philip was called. What we know of Nathanael’s character we find in his call to discipleship as described in the Gospel of John.

Philip said to Nathanael, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote” (John 1:45). For Philip to use these words indicates that he knew the truth of Scripture would be important to Nathanael. Nathanael knew the Old Testament prophecies~perhaps they studied the Scriptures together. Philip knew that Nathanael was seeking truth. Nathanael and most of the other disciples already loved God, desired truth, and longed to receive the Messiah.

Upon meeting Him face to face, Nathanael recognized Jesus instantly; he understood how the Scriptures described Him. Nathanael received Jesus as the Messiah immediately; however, prior to the actual face-to-face with Jesus, we get a glimpse of another side of Nathanael. Philip mentions that the Messiah is “Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45). Nathanael’s response was, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (v.46). This response shows a deep prejudice. This **“was not a rational or biblical objection; it was based on sheer emotion and bigotry. It reveals what contempt Nathanael had for the whole town of Nazareth.”** Fortunately, Nathanael’s prejudice was not strong enough to stop him~when Philip said, “Come and see,” he went (v.46).

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NATHANIEL, THE GUILLESS ONE

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Jesus, of course, already knew Nathanael. Jesus “had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man” (John 2:25). **“So His first words upon seeing Nathanael were a powerful commendation of Nathanael’s character. Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him and said of him, ‘Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!’”** (John 1:47).

Could there be a more remarkable moment than to have these words of approval come straight from Jesus? Nathanael asks, “How do you know me?” (John 1:48). Jesus replies, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you” (v. 48). Nathanael knew he was standing in the presence of God. Jesus had not only seen him physically through an omniscient eye, He had seen the state of his heart. Nathanael proclaimed, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (v.49). Jesus promised, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man” (John 1:51). **“Most of the disciples struggled just to come to the place where Nathanael stood after his first meeting with Christ. But for Nathanael, the ministry of Christ only affirmed what he already knew to be true.”**

Certainly Nathanael had areas of weakness, but the words of Jesus indicate that, from the beginning, Nathanael was pure of heart.



matthew

the tax collector

We know very little about Matthew-interesting since he wrote the Gospel that bears his name. We do know that he was a tax collector. Tax collectors were the most reviled people in Israel. They were considered despicable scoundrels. Yet Matthew was called. “As Jesus passed on from [Capernaum], He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him” (Matthew 9:9). What was it that made him immediately follow Jesus? Why would he simply abandon his profession and everything he had known to follow this Man?

“The best answer we can deduce is that whatever Matthew’s tortured soul may have experienced because of the profession he had chosen to be in, down deep inside he was a Jew who knew and loved the Old Testament.”

He was spiritually hungry, so the draw of Jesus was irresistible. He knew the Old Testament very well—he quotes it ninety-nine times in his Gospel (more than Mark, Luke, and John combined). We know he was a social outcast as a Jew because of his profession. He would not have been allowed in a synagogue. He had to have studied Scripture on his own. He believed in the true God, knew of God’s revelation, and understood there would someday be a Messiah. As a tax collector he was always in the path of information, so he knew of Jesus and His miracles. So when Jesus called him, he dropped everything and went.

For the rest of his life, he was a quiet and humble man who cared for the outcasts of society and introduced them to Jesus.

“He stands as a vivid reminder that the Lord often chooses the most despicable people of the world, redeems them, gives them new hearts, and uses them in remarkable ways.”



thomas

the twin

Thomas was also called *Didymus* which means “the twin.” He must have had a twin brother or sister, though that person was never mentioned in Scripture. He is better known for his nickname *Doubting Thomas*—though Scripture shows far more positive in Thomas than negative.

He was a man who dearly loved the Lord and was willing to die with Him rather than be without him. Thomas did have a tendency to see the worst of everything. In John 11 Martha and Mary sent for Jesus to come to Bethany and heal Lazarus. Bethany, which was just outside of Jerusalem, was a dangerous place (in the opinion of the disciples) for Jesus to go. Jesus, of course, knew the appointed time of His death so He knew He could safely go. But, to the disciples, this seemed not only a dangerous place for Jesus, but deadly. If they went with Him, they would surely die also! It was at this point that Thomas said, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (John 11:16).

“Now this is pessimistic, and that’s typical for Thomas. But it is a heroic pessimism...He was convinced Jesus was heading straight for a stoning. But if that is what the Lord was determined to do, Thomas was grimly determined to go and die with Him. You have to admire his courage.”

It is easy for an optimist to be loyal—after all, it will all turn out for the best! How much harder it is for a pessimist to be loyal! A pessimist is convinced the future holds only doom. In spite of his pessimism, Thomas was determined to be at Jesus’ side. This may be pessimism but it is heroic pessimism and that takes incredible courage! Thomas was absolutely devoted to Jesus and did not care to live without Him.

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THOMAS, THE TWIN

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As we know, Jesus died and Thomas did have to go on living. **“Thomas may well have felt alone, betrayed, rejected, forsaken.”** He was in no mood to be around the others; he just wanted to be alone. So, when Jesus appeared in the Upper Room, Thomas was not there. Later, the others told him, “We have seen the Lord” (v. 25). Thomas was not about to be cheered up so simply. He said, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe” (v.25). Eight days later when Jesus appeared to them again, Thomas was present. Of course Jesus already knew what Thomas had said and He tenderly commanded, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing” (v.27).

Because of his pessimism, Thomas had erred, but it was a mistake of profound love.

“So Jesus was tender with him. He understands our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15). So He understands our doubt. He sympathizes with our uncertainty. He is patient with our pessimism. And while recognizing these weaknesses, we must also acknowledge Thomas’s heroic devotion to Christ, which made him understand that it would be better to die than to be separated from his Lord. The proof of his love was the profoundness of his despair.”

Little is known about the final group of four Apostles. Except for Judas Iscariot, the Gospels are almost silent as far as they are concerned. However, like the men in the other two groups, they gave up everything to follow Christ. **CBS**

james the less

There were several men named James in the Scriptures~James, son of Zebedee; James, son of Mary and Joseph (Jesus’ half brother); James who wrote the epistle that bears his name; and others. This James was the son of Alphaeus. He is referred to as “James the Less” in Mark 15:40. He may have been small in stature or younger than the others but the nickname was probably based upon his influence. Perhaps all three were true~he may have been a small, young, and quiet person. James may be one of many Christians whose works go unheralded. **“Eternity will reveal the names and testimonies of these, like James the Less, whom this world barely remembers and knows nothing about.”** **CBS**

simon the zealot

Simon was probably a former member of a political party known as the Zealots~a feared outlaw political sect. In both Matthew and Mark, he is listed just before Judas Iscariot, which indicates they were probably a team. They probably had similar political reasons to follow Jesus initially, but along the way Simon actually accepted Christ and became

a true believer~Judas never did. Simon and Matthew were at opposite ends of the political extreme, yet they became spiritual brothers who worked side by side to spread the gospel of the Lord they both worshipped. **CBS**

judas

(not Iscariot)
the apostle
with
three names

Judas, son of James, was always referred to in Scripture as Judas (not Iscariot) in order to distinguish him from the negative association to Judas, the betrayer. Judas, son of James had three names: Judas, his birth name; Lebbaeus, which means *heart child*; and Thaddaeus, which means *breast child*. The names suggest a sweet, childlike person.

There is only one incident in which Judas Lebbaeus Thaddaeus was involved. It took place in the Upper Room. Jesus said, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him” (John 14:21). Judas (not Iscariot) asked, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?” (v.22) His question was meek~there was no pride in it. Why would Jesus manifest Himself to this rag-tag group and not to all the world? Jesus tenderly answers, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him” (John 14:23). **“Thus this tender-hearted soul...was as powerful and far-reaching as that of the better-known and more outspoken disciples. He, like them, is proof of how God uses perfectly ordinary people in remarkable ways.”** **CBS**

judas the traitor

The betrayer~his name appears last in every list of the apostles except for Acts 1 where it simply does not appear.

“He committed the most horrible, heinous act of any individual, ever. He betrayed the perfect, sinless, holy Son of God for a handful of money.”

The New Testament includes enough about Judas to establish two very important lessons:

- It is entirely possible to be near to Christ and still be totally hardened by sin.
- A sinful person, no matter how evil the attempt may be, cannot thwart God’s will and purpose.

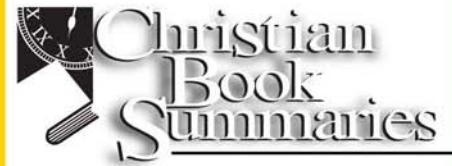
Judas came from afar to join the group and was unknown to the other disciples. Like the others, he was ordinary in every way. Unlike the others, he never gave Jesus his heart. His heart belonged to the political and material world. The other disciples never suspected him~his deception was so masterfully played. He began with an expectation of the Messiah establishing His kingdom, which in his mind meant power and riches. It did not take long for Judas to become disillusioned. He was able to hide his disappointment in order to buy time to find a way to be paid for the time he had invested in this Man. In the final days, Judas’ disillusionment progressed to hate~after all, Jesus had stolen years of his life. This ate at him until he was so hardened that he was capable of utter treachery. Although Jesus had never been anything but kind to him, Judas betrayed Him.

Judas created his own hell. The consequence of sin was guilt. Sadly, he never cried out to God. He never asked for mercy. He silenced the voice of guilt with suicide. Jesus had spoken of His betrayer, “It would have been good for that man if he had never been born” (Mark 14:21). **“When Judas bartered away the life of Christ, he was in effect selling his own soul to the devil.”**

conclusion

These are the stories of twelve ordinary men who, with the exception of one, established the early Church.

“...With all their faults and character flaws~as remarkably ordinary as they were~these men carried on a ministry after Jesus’ ascension that left an indelible impact on the world. Their ministry continues to influence us even today. God graciously empowered and used these men to inaugurate the spread of the gospel message and to turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6). Ordinary men~people like you and me~became the instruments by which Christ’s message was carried to the ends of the earth.”



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