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Thaddaeus—The Apostle Who Wasn't Afraid To Ask Questions

... I too will love them and show myself to them." Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world? (John 14:22, NIV).

I am an inquisitive person. I ask many questions. On the golf course, I'm always asking questions to gather information relevant to my round. Where is the pin placement? Which way and how much is the wind blowing? Which way is my putt going to break? What direction is the grain running?

Although I tend to drive my playing partners nuts with these constant inquiries, I need data to make intelligent decisions and to understand the factors that can impact the outcome of a shot.

Thaddaeus is part of a group of lesser-known apostles we've explored in recent devotionals. Jerome, a fourth-century historian, called Thaddaeus "the man with three names." Matthew and Mark refer to him as "Thaddaeus" (In the KJV, Matthew refers to him as "Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus"). Luke refers to him twice as "Judas son of James" John, to make sure there is no confusion with Judas Iscariot, calls him "Judas (not Judas Iscariot)."

In his book, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, John MacArthur suggests that he was a "gentle soul with a tender, childlike heart."

After Jesus' last meal with the disciples is finished, he attempts to comfort his apostles and prepare them for the future. Several of the apostles struggle with what Jesus tells them. They pepper him with questions. Peter asks, "Lord, where are you going?" and "Lord, why can't I follow you now?" Thomas follows up with, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Philip asks: "Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us."

Then, in his only speaking part in all of Scripture, Thaddeus asks: "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" The apostles, with an earthly mindset and anticipating Jesus as a new earthly ruler to replace the existing Roman rule, struggle with the "heavenly" aspects of Jesus' teaching. Thaddaeus wonders why Jesus is excluding everyone but the apostles from his disclosures.

We can be encouraged by Thaddaeus' willingness to ask questions. Asking questions demonstrates our eagerness to learn and our consciousness of our need for teaching. The various stages of our understanding and thinking are revealed when we pose questions. Similarly, asking questions can reveal the frankness of an honest mind which did not understand and can demonstrate that we are not ashamed to confess our ignorance.

When I taught trial skills to law students and young lawyers, I encouraged them to be curious and inquisitive. I suggested to them that there was no such thing as a “dumb” question. Applying that same principle to our faith journey, we should not hesitate to ask well-thought-out and carefully crafted questions to gain knowledge, insight, and understanding of the vast array of “thorny” issues we encounter in Scripture and in our desire to “live out” Jesus’ teachings. If we strive to do that, we will enjoy a richer and more rewarding journey with Jesus.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help me ask those important and challenging questions I encounter in my faith journey so I might better understand my walk with Jesus.

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Mark “Ole” Olson

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