

How Do You Increase Your Faith?

^{v19} Then the disciples approached Jesus privately and said, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

^{v20} "Because of your little faith," he told them. "For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

In this passage Jesus heals a child who was demon possessed. The disciples were unable to perform the exorcism themselves, and Jesus had to do it when he got on the scene. Afterward, the disciples ask why they couldn't do it. Jesus tells them their faith was too small. Yet, even small faith (mustard seed faith) can metaphorically move mountains.

My Observations

At its core, faith is a trust in something not yet realized ([Heb-11 > v1](#)), specifically trust in God. In each of the instances in the CSB where the phrase "little faith" is used Jesus is calling out his disciples for a lack of trust in God for what he is able to do. As it relates to the passage at hand, we can see that Jesus calls out his disciples for a lack of prayer as the reason for their inability to exorcise the demon in the parallel Mark passage ([Mk-09 > v29](#)).

This reminds me of my sermon on [Php 4:5-9](#) titled [Overwhelming Peace](#) where I talk about worry being the root of our anxieties and our need to give them over to God as Paul commands in the passage. The solution to those worries is to take our concerns to God in prayer. In other words, we are to exhibit faith. As I think about that sermon and the passage I preached on, I can see that we can rightly say that in those moments when we are worrying or anxious we are exhibiting "little faith" as talked about by Jesus. Yet, the cure is turning our attention and focus to God.

So, if "little faith" can be attributed to a lack of focus on God and his abilities, we can say that a "great faith" or "strong faith" is one that is prayerful and keeps its attention on God, instead of looking inward at our own abilities.

Notes

Cross References & Parallel Passages

Passages that contain the phrase "little faith" in the CSB

- [Mt-06 > v30](#) - In the sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks about how God should take care of us, just like he does the things in nature
- [Mt-08 > v26](#) - This is during the storm when Jesus was sleeping in the boat, and he tells the disciples they have little faith before rebuking the storm
- [Mt-14 > v31](#) - Jesus calls out Peter for his little faith as he began to sink while walking on water
- [Mt-16 > v8](#) - This is after the disciples realize they have no food with them, completely forgetting two times when Jesus fed the multitudes with little
- [Lk-12 > v28](#) - This is parallel to the [Mt-06 > v30](#) passage

Parallel passages

- [Mk-09 > v14ff](#) is a parallel account of the events described in Matthew, [vv. 28-29](#) are the key passages that parallel what I'm interested in
- In this same Mark passage, Jesus confronts the father and lets him know that all things are possible for the one who believes, and the father says, "I do believe, help my unbelief!" [vv. 23-24](#)

Other related passages

- [Mt. 21:21-22](#) - Here Jesus describes what can be done when great faith is exhibited
- [Mk 11:23-24](#) - The parallel to the [Mt-21](#) passage
- [Lk-17 > v6](#) - Jesus uses the illustration of how little faith can do great things
- [Jn-11 > v40](#) - in this passage Jesus is about to raise Lazarus and he says these words in response to Martha saying that if she believed she would see the glory of God
- [Rom-14 > v1](#) - Paul encourages us to be welcoming of those who are weaker in their faith, but not to argue over matters that they struggle with

Word Study

- **ὀλιγοπιστία** is the Greek word translated as "little faith" in [Mt-17 > v20](#) - G3640b in the NASB Strong's lexicon - only used this 1x in Scripture & is only ever found in Christian writings
- **ὀλιγόπιστος** is the Greek word translated as "little faith" in all the other passages listed above - G3640a in the NASB Strong's lexicon - used 5x, specifically in the synoptic gospels and when Jesus is speaking

Questions that need to be answered

- What is “little faith”?
- How does someone increase their faith?
- What does it mean to have great faith? What does that even look like?
- Who are people in the Bible who had great faith?
- Who are people in the Bible who exhibited weak faith?