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Disciples of Jesus as People of Little Faith in the Gospel of Matthew

In the Gospel of Matthew, the disciples of Jesus are called people “of little faith.” In Greek, this phrase is a single word, *oligopistoi*, and it is used by Jesus as a nickname for his disciples.

Matthew 6:30:

Jesus tells his disciples not to worry about what they will wear.

“Consider the lilies of the field,” he says. “If God so clothes the grass of the field . . . will he not much more clothe you—you *of little faith*.”

Matthew 8:26

Jesus is with his disciples in a boat when a storm at sea comes up.

They are terrified. He asks them, “Why are you afraid, you *of little faith*?” Then he miraculously calms the sea.

Matthew 14:31

When Peter tries to walk on the water, he is afraid and begins to sink. He calls out for help, and Jesus grabs him. Lifting him up,

Jesus asks, “*You of little faith*, why did you doubt?”

Matthew 16:8

One day, after miraculously feeding the multitudes, Jesus is teaching his disciples and he uses the metaphor of “leaven.” They misunderstand the expression and think he is concerned about whether they will have enough real leaven to make bread when they

need it. He asks, “*You of little faith*, why are you talking about having no bread?”

Matthew 17:20

When Jesus’s disciples are unable to drive a demon out of a possessed child, Jesus tells them that it is because of their “little faith.” This is the fifth and last time that he uses that expression with them, but then he reveals something especially important: “Truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of 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.”

These concluding words about the mustard seed seem to indicate that being “people of little faith” is not a devastating fault: those with a very small amount of faith can still do great things for God.