



Touchstones Project

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May 2022

Courage

Wisdom Story



Introduction to the Theme

Courage is a word that comes from a root that means “heart.” To “encourage” is to “put heart into” another person. “Courage,” wrote Martin Luther King, Jr., “is the power of the mind to overcome fear.” This is a good starting point to begin an exploration of courage. But first, fear. To truly appreciate its paralyzing power, we need only ask in some situations, “What would I do in this situation if I was not afraid?” The answer can be enlightening; an answer that reveals how fear shrinks the options that we believe are available to us. It is in this sense that Anais Nin said, “Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one’s courage.” For the Greek philosophers, courage was one of the cardinal virtues. Given the fear, hatred, and despair in the

world, courage is essential to survival. That there is so much fear, hatred, and despair also suggest that courage is a virtue in short supply. We should take heart because courage can be cultivated.

The concept of courage has traditionally involved two types: physical and moral. In the long history of humankind, physical courage emerged first and was decisive for the survival of our species. Physical courage involves acting in situations that are dangerous, physically challenging, and/or painful; situations that may involve bodily harm or even death. It does not involve the absence of fear, but the ability to act in the face of fear. No fear, no courage; foolishness or foolhardy, perhaps, but not courage.

Aristotle saw courage as the fulcrum between deficient and excess, by which he meant the deficit of cowardice, on the one hand, and the excess of recklessness, on the other, which looks like courage, but which is an unreflective combination of indifference to the dangers of a situa-

(Continued on page 6)

Grandmother Spider Brings the Light

A retelling of a story from a Native American tradition, Cherokee, Hopi, and others

When the earth was first made, it was very dark and cold, and the animals were afraid. One day Bear said, “I have seen light on the other side of the world, but the people will not share. Perhaps we could steal some for ourselves.”

The others thought this was a splendid idea, and started to discuss who should go first. They knew that it would require a great deal of courage to steal



some of the light, but they were determined to bring back the light.

“I’ll go,” said fox. Everyone thought that this was a

good idea because fox was both brave and sly.

Fox went, and stole a piece of light in his mouth, but it was so hot it burned his mouth and he dropped it, and the fox still has a black mouth to this day.

Possum tried next. He wrapped the light in his tail, and tried to drag it back, but it was too hot, and he dropped it. That is why no possum has fur on its tail.

Crow said, “Let me try!” And he went off to steal the light, but when he got close, it singed all of his feathers, and he turned black. He was so afraid, he ran away.

Finally, Grandmother Spider said, “I

(Continued on page 2)

Courage & Repairing the World

In 1931, Winston Churchill wrote, “Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities, because ...it is the quality which guarantees all others.” Repairing the world has never been easy work, and that is even truer in these times because of competing understandings of what, in fact, needs to be repaired. The repair needed because of climate change is instructive. While many accept the challenge of climate change, powerful interests dismiss it. It is not simply about working to make the systemic changes to slow and eventually stop climate change. It is also overcoming the considerable obstruction by those in opposition. This effort requires courage, components of which are bravery, persistence, and integrity.

A Theme-Based Ministry Project

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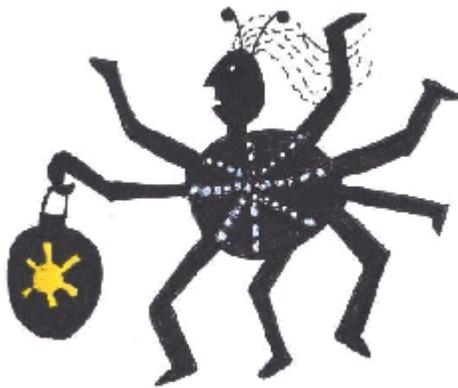
Repairing the World

Sun Hung Bright

(Continued from page 1) **Wisdom Story**
will go." The other animals were hopeful, for they knew that Grandmother Spider was fearless. When she reached the light, she was surprised by how hot it was. She thought of a plan, and began to spin and spin with her silky web. Soon she had enough for a bag. She approached the light, and quick as a flash, tucked the light into her bag. She began dragging the bag of light home.

When she got back, the animals were triumphant! "Hooray for Grandmother Spider!" they all shouted.

Grandmother Spider was happy to



give them the light. "We should hang the light in the sky, so all can be warmed by it," she said. The other animals thought that, too, was a good idea, but how to get it up in the sky?

"I will go," said Vulture. He took the bag of light, and put it on his head. It was hot, but he could stand it. He flew higher and higher, and the bag got hotter and hotter. He climbed higher, and his feathers turned black. Still higher, and the feathers on his head burned off! Still higher, and his head turned red. At the last possible second, he threw the light into the sky as hard as he could, and the Sun hung bright and beautiful, warming all the land.

The animals now could enjoy the sunlight, but they also welcomed the night for that was when some on them like the fox liked to hunt.

Source: <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/miracles/session-1/spider>

Shared Courage

Spiritual Courage

Rev. Barbara Wells ten Hove



Courage and bravery, in my view, are not necessarily the same thing. Bravery, as I understand it, suggests a kind of fearlessness. Brave people face danger willingly, even eagerly, for they are not afraid.

But courage is different. Courage is less about fear and more about something deeper, something, I think, that has to do with one's spirit or soul. Courage is doing the right thing, even in the face of those who tell us we are crazy or stupid. Courage is taking a stand and living with it. Courage is also about growth, about a willingness to change one's mind if that is the right thing to do. A brave person may fight when called upon. A courageous person may choose not to fight even if it means certain death.

I believe that courage is a spiritual value.... [Courage] is something I hope for and pray for and believe is necessary for a meaningful life.

...It is essential ...to understand why courage, in particular moral courage, develops in people, and how it lives itself out in ordinary and extraordinary times.

I like to think that if the need arises, we will be able to respond. But I also believe we can't do it alone. ...We need to know that the values we affirm are shared by others. ...Knowing that others share our deep-seated belief in the dignity of human life and the sacredness of creation, we can feel strong and capable, even if circumstances demand we act alone.

Source: No longer online

Truth and Mercy

Social Courage

John Paul Lederach

I was working with that notion of the moral imagination—...that you're in a web of relationships that includes your enemy, because your grandchildren are going to be mutually affected. So how to hold these...—...it's actually the art of everything.

Courage is ...living from the heart; [which is] ...where the word, "courage," comes from. In highly polarized settings, one of the ways I understand social courage is that it takes courage to reach out to things that are not known, not well understood; that may be threatening to you; that may, in fact, pose a threat to everything you believe. So, there's a certain kind of courage that it takes to reach into that unknown.



But there is also a courage that is required of us—that when we see our own community dehumanizing others, that we have the courage to speak to that dehumanization. So social courage cuts ...both ways, and this is sometimes the hard part, ... [since] we just would like it to be one way. But then we're backing away, aren't we, from the complexity? We're not willing to sit with the mess of who we are in a way that finds a way to speak to that clearly.

The psalm ...most helpful for me was Psalm 85: "Truth and mercy have met together. Justice and peace have kissed." ...I began to ask, what if truth showed up here today? What if mercy showed up alongside of truth? And how in the world do you hold truth and mercy together, so it's not choosing one over the other, but somehow, they're there? I think that's the real challenge of learning to live with that tension: not avoiding it.

Source: <https://onbeing.org/programs/america-ferrera-john-paul-lederach-the-ingredients-of-social-courage/>

Readings from the Common Bowl

Day 1: "Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear."
Ambrose Redmoon



kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest."
Maya Angelou

Day 13: "The secret of happiness is freedom; the secret of freedom is courage."
Carrie Jones

Day 14: "You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do."
Eleanor Roosevelt

Day 15: "Courage can't see around corners, but goes around them anyway."
Mignon McLaughlin

Day 16: "Courage is grace under pressure."
Ernest Hemingway

Day 2: "People are made of flesh and blood and a miracle fiber called courage."
Mignon McLaughlin

Day 3: "Courage is as often the outcome of despair as of hope; in the one case we have nothing to lose, in the other everything to gain."
Diane de Poitiers

Day 4: "When we are afraid, we ought not to occupy ourselves with endeavoring to prove that there is no danger, but in strengthening ourselves to go on in spite of the danger."
Mark Rutherford

Day 5: "Courage is a gift. Those having it never know for sure if they have it till the test comes. And those having it in one test never know for sure if they will have it when the next test comes."
Carl Sandburg

Day 6: "Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear—not absence of fear."
Mark Twain

Day 7: "To live with fear and not be afraid is the final test of maturity."
Edward Weeks

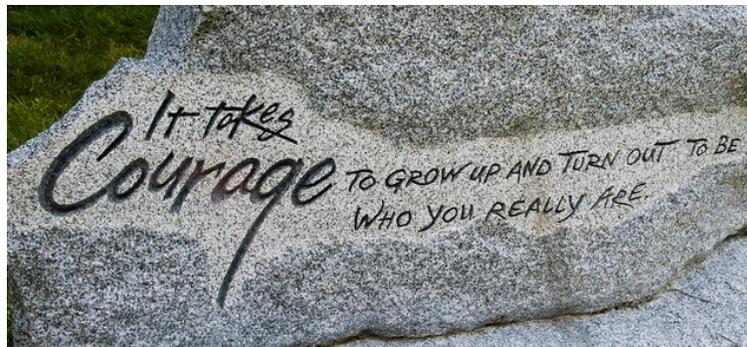
Day 8: "Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point."
C.S. Lewis

Day 9: "Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen."
Winston Churchill

Day 10: "One person with courage makes a majority."
Andrew Jackson

Day 11: "The important thing is this: To be able at any moment to sacrifice what we are for what we could become."
Charles Dubois

Day 12: "One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be



Day 17: "Something happens to me when I witness someone's courage. They may not know I'm watching and I might not let them know. But something happens to me that will last me for a lifetime. To fill me when I'm empty, and rock me when I'm low."
Holly Near

Day 18: "But a man or woman becomes fully human only by his or her choices and his or her commitment to them. People attain worth and dignity by the multitude of decisions they make from day by day. These decisions require courage."
Rollo May

Day 19: "It takes courage to push yourself to places that you have never been before... to test your limits... to break through barriers. And the day came when the risk it took to remain tight inside the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom."
Anaïs Nin

Day 20: "The highest courage is to dare to be yourself in the face of adversity. Choosing right over wrong, ethics over convenience, and truth over popularity... these are the choices that measure your

life. Travel the path of integrity without looking back, for there is never a wrong time to do the right thing."
Source Unknown

Day 21: "Go to the edge of the cliff and jump off. Build your wings on the way down."
Ray Bradbury

Day 22: "...part of us dies when we know that something is wrong, yet do nothing. We could call this radical dignity. We don't have to tackle every issue, but if we remain silent in the face of cruelty, injustice, and oppression, we sacrifice part of our soul."
Paul Rogat Loeb

Day 23: "Love makes us human; courage makes us extraordinary."
Faryal K. Kharal

Day 24: "Courage doesn't happen when you have all the answers. It happens when you are ready to face the questions you have been avoiding your whole life."
Shannon L. Alder

Day 25: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."
Reinhold Niebuhr

Day 26: "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Day 27: "There are all kinds of courage. It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends."
J. K. Rowling

Day 28: "Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I'll try again tomorrow."
Mary Anne Radmacher

Day 29: "I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what."
Harper Lee

Day 30: "Courage is not the towering oak that sees storms come and go; it is the fragile blossom that opens in the snow."
Alice M. Swaim

Day 31: "Sometimes even to live is an act of courage."
Seneca



girds her work ...says that she learned to confront her own fears in the midst of devastating personal circumstances. In her book

The Fear Patrol

Neil Shister, excerpt

What are we afraid of? How can we distinguish legitimate fears from the anxieties, worries, and dread that others try to manipulate in us?

...Fear is not easy to talk about. We live in the "home of the brave:" our public culture celebrates courage, optimism, and self-confidence. Therapists help many people learn to name their fears in the secure setting of a private office, and sometimes friends and families and religious communities help put public words to private fears. More often, however, we try to keep our fears out of other people's sight.



Out of sight, though, most definitely is not out of mind. What's most debilitating about our fears isn't that we don't talk much about them. It's that our fears damage us before we even recognize they are there. Whether they are internal, rooted in long-ago personal experiences burrowed deep in psychic space, or external, drilled into us by powerful forces aimed at creating collective anxiety, our fears almost always wear disguises. Many people who deal with fear's consequences—counselors, ministers, sociologists—express a shared urgency that few tasks are more important to our spiritual ...well-being than unmasking fear and charting the territory it ...patrols.

...Francis Moore Lappé, who credits her Unitarian Universalist upbringing for the worldview that under-

girds her work ...says that she learned to confront her own fears in the midst of devastating personal circumstances. In her book with Jeffrey Perkins, *You Have the Power: Choosing Courage in a Culture of Fear*, she tells the story of how ...her longtime marriage ended, economic circumstances forced a move from her small Vermont town to a big city where she knew nobody, and then, ...she was diagnosed with a life-threatening disease. Her tale sounds like a latter-day version of Job.

In an interview, she said the experience of feeling so alone brought her to a new threshold in understanding fright not only in her own life but also in cultural messages: "The root of so much fear is fear of rejection and banishment. To be expelled from the tribe," she explained, referring to the evolutionary era that produced the nervous system that still governs our fear, "is death. Acknowledging fear is allowing our own sense of inadequacy to be perceived by others. We so desperately need each other's approval."

To acknowledge fear, to discard the carefully constructed roles and behaviors we use as disguises, "throws us on the outside," Lappé said. It feels like a declaration that we are flawed, inadequate in some fundamental way, even unworthy of being included within the circle of society. "We put ourselves in social jeopardy and invite contempt. That's the bad news."

But here's Lappé's good news: Fearfulness needn't be permanent. Indeed, she said, moments of fear can themselves become invitations to growth. Instead of harbingers of dread and passivity, Lappé came to see them as cues for action. "Fear doesn't necessarily mean 'stop,'" she said, "it can mean 'go.' Those uncomfortable sensations are telling you that you are in entirely new territory. Once you're really able to walk in your fear, you start reaching out to people who will encourage and embrace the truer you. You start to realize that 'I'm going to draw people to me who will honor me rather than dismiss me.'"

Source: <http://www.uuworld.org/articles/the-fear-patrol>

Brave & Afraid

The Courage to Be Vulnerable

Brené Brown

I always ask a very simple question to people. I just say, think of the last time you did something that you thought was really brave or the last time you saw someone do something really brave? And



I can tell you as a researcher ...I cannot find a single example of courage, moral courage, spiritual courage, leadership courage, relational courage, I cannot find a single example of courage that was not born completely of vulnerability. We buy into some mythology about vulnerability being weakness and being gullibility and being frailty because it gives us permission not to do it. I think it is recognizing that, if courage is a value that we hold as important, that vulnerability is the only way in and through.

It starts by an openness to seeing ourselves and seeing ...how we're protecting ourselves from vulnerability. ...I am the most successful ...trying to be real and transparent and me and feeling good in my own skin when I stay very aware of what kind of armor I'm throwing up or when I feel afraid.

...The definitive piece of knowing that has helped me with this is that I was raised in a ...binary culture. If things were good or bad, you know, you were brave or you were afraid. You were courageous or you were fearful. ...One of the definitive moments in my life was realizing that most of us are brave and afraid in the exact same moment all day long.

Source: <https://onbeing.org/programs/brene-brown-the-courage-to-be-vulnerable-jan2015/#transcript>

Building Courage in Kids

Karen Young

Karen Young writes of ways to build courage in children. “Courage isn’t about something magical that happens inside us to make us ‘not scared’. It’s about something magical that happens inside us to make us push through fear, self-doubt, anxiety, and do the things that feel hard or risky or frightening. Sometimes, courage only has to happen for seconds at a time—just long enough to be brave enough.”

She offers a number of things that can be done to cultivate courage. These include:

Speak of their brave as though they’re already there: Let them know that courage is coming alive inside them.

Give permission for imperfection: Often failure involves the courage of trying something difficult.

You won’t always feel ready. That’s why it’s called courage: Courage can emerge when least expected, an outcome of fanning the spark of courage within.

Try something new: Moving outside their comfort zone can nurture a brave heart.

Be the example: Talk with your children about learning to be courageous, including addressing fear and doubt and other things that can challenge courage.

Give them space for courage of thought: This allows them to resist peer pressure, to question things, and to find their own way.

Give space for their intuition to flourish—and teach them how to use it: Gut feelings and heart whispers can often lead to doing what is right, not what is easy, and that often takes courage.

And then there’s self-talk. Sneaky, sidelining self-talk: “The ‘can’ts,’ ‘should,’ ‘shouldn’ts,’ and ‘what-ifs’ nurture fear rather than courage.” Courage can overcome fear and self-doubt.

It’s never too late to change ... anything: You can start with courage, and still change your mind, you can make a different decision.

The outcome doesn’t matter as much as the process: Playing it safe is a focus on the ending. Focus on the process so

courage is advanced by each small step.

Encourage their sense of adventure: Adventure has a way of nurturing courage.

Celebrate their courage regularly: Each good decision, small victory, or risk can involve courage. Create a weekly family ritual where everyone shares their “brave.”

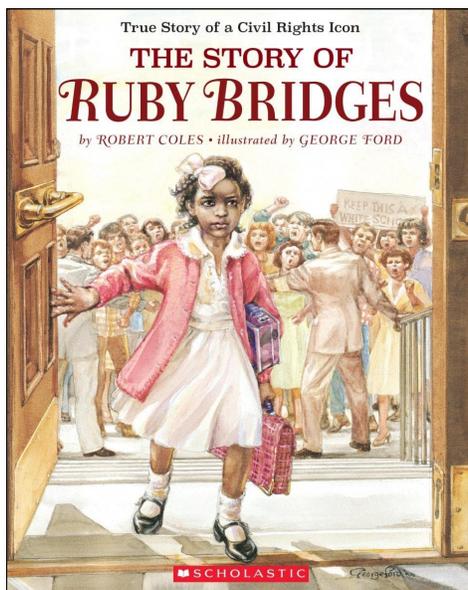
Courage is about doing what’s right for them: Sometimes saying no requires considerable courage, and sometimes it is saying yes.

Young concludes, “The truth is, our children are slaying their own dragons, every day. ...The key is helping them realize it so they can use it to push through their edges when they feel small, scared, confused, or unseen.”

Source: <https://www.heysigmund.com/building-courage-in-kids/>

Family Activity: Ruby Bridges

Read *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles, author and George Ford, illustrator (1995) or watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRfy2xs8Xpg> (8:35) Discuss the story with your children. The following questions may get you started. What made Ruby so different from everyone else? What challenges did Ruby face going to an all-white school? How would you feel if you were Ruby? What would you do if you were Ruby in that situation? In what ways was Ruby brave?



The Courage to Be Yourself

ee cummings

This comes from cummings’ “A Poet’s Advice to Students.” Written in 1953, it includes his quote, “To be nobody but yourself....” Cummings, a Unitarian, fought that battle in 1950 when he was awarded the prestigious Academy of American Poets annual fellowship. He was harshly criticized by traditionalists who hated him for his bravery of breaking with tradition and being nobody-but-himself in his poetry.

A poet is somebody who feels, and who expresses his feelings through words. This may sound easy. It isn’t.

A lot of people think or believe or know they feel—but that’s thinking or believing or knowing; not feeling. And poetry is feeling—not knowing or believing or thinking.

Almost anybody can learn to think or believe or know, but not a single human being can be taught to feel. Why? Because whenever you think or you believe or you know, you’re a lot of other people: but the moment you feel, you’re nobody-but-yourself.

To be nobody-but-yourself—in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else—means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight; and never stop fighting.

As for expressing nobody-but-yourself in words, that means working just a little harder than anybody who isn’t a poet can possibly imagine. Why? Because nothing is quite as easy as using words like somebody else. We all of us do exactly this nearly all of the time—and whenever we do it, we’re not poets.

If, at the end of your first ten or fifteen years of fighting and working and feeling, you find you’ve written one line of one poem, you’ll be very lucky indeed.

And so my advice to all young people who wish to become poets is: do something easy, like learning how to blow up the world—unless you’re not only willing, but glad, to feel and work and fight till you die. Does that sound dismal? It isn’t. It’s the most wonderful life on earth. Or so I feel. Source: <https://www.themarginalian.org/2017/09/25/e-e-cummings-advice/>

(Continued from page 1) **Intro to the Theme**
tion or the consequences of one's actions.

Mark Twain wrote, "It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare." While we associate physical courage with the military, it is notable that both types of courage are highly valued by the armed services. A Department of the Army employee "pointed out that consistent moral courage is every bit as important as momentary physical courage." He said, "Situations requiring physical courage are rare; situations requiring moral courage can occur frequently. Moral courage is essential to living the Army values of integrity and honor every day."

Rushworth Kidder said that while physical courage may be related to principles, moral courage is driven by principles. Kidder talks about three strands that, when braided together, result in morally courageous action: "a commitment to moral *principles*, an awareness of the *danger* involved in supporting those principles, and a willing *endurance* of that danger." Moral courage emerges where principles, danger, and endurance intersect. In the end, moral courage is the courage to be moral.

In addition to physical and moral courage, some suggest other kinds of courage: emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and social.

Christopher Peterson and Martin E.P. Seligman offer a different typology. They begin with *bravery*, which can be physical, but could, as an example, involve facing a terminal illness with equanimity. They see *persistence* as courage because it requires a mustering of willpower to engage things that are quite difficult, frustrating, or even boring. A third example of courage is *integrity*, which has moral dimensions like truthfulness, taking responsibility, and authenticity. Finally, they suggest *vitality*, which is enthusiasm about and zest for activities and life itself.

Another dimension of courage involves pursuing a vision, which is never

easy, and the more audacious the vision, the greater the difficulty. A compelling vision tends to emerge out of a **holy curiosity**. Albert Einstein said, "The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when contemplating the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity."

But holy curiosity is not enough. It does not, to use Sam Keen's phrase, put "fire in the belly." A compelling vision becomes a great vision because of a **holy discontent**. In his play *Back to Methuselah*, George Bernard Shaw had the Serpent in the Garden of Eden say to Eve, "You see things; and you say, 'Why?' But I dream things that never were; and I say, 'Why not?'" Senator Robert F. Kennedy used these words as a theme in his 1968 campaign for the presidential nomination.

The combination of holy curiosity and holy discontent can create a commanding vision, but more is needed. Toni Cade Bambara's novel, *The Salt Eaters*, is a story about a black community in the south, its terror and fear, its strength and desire. Velma who was sturdy and dependable fell into the depths of despair. As Bambara reminds us, "people sometimes believed that it was safer to live with complaints, was necessary to cooperate with grief, was all right to become an accomplice in self-ambush." Minnie, the wise, eccentric healer asks Velma, "No sense wasting each other's time, sweetheart... Can you afford to be whole? Can you afford it, is what I'm asking you, sweetheart...?" With Minnie's help, Velma moves through despair in the direction of healing and wholeness. Velma takes up dancing and finds freedom, a freedom so powerful that she could, writes Bambara, "with no luggage and no maps ...go anywhere in the universe on just sheer holy boldness." **Holy boldness** is the final ingredient to combat fear and bring a bold

The Cadence of Courage

Rev. Galen Guengerich

When asked by Socrates to say what courage is, Laches replies, that's easy enough. Anyone who stays at his post, faces the enemy, and doesn't run away, you may be sure is courageous.

Surely courage is more than staying put in battle, Socrates replies. Sometimes great victories are won by falling back and regrouping. Besides, people can be courageous in other areas of life: against the perils of the sea, for example, or against disease or poverty. People can also be courageous in public affairs, or in facing their own desires and pleasures.

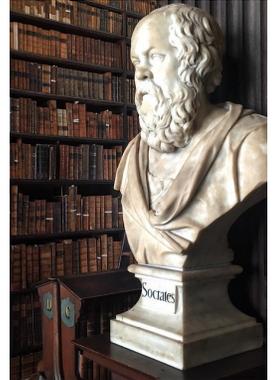
This is quite true, Laches agrees. ... Socrates turns to Nicias, who ...ventures that courage is somehow related to the goal being sought or the danger being avoided. Nicias eventually concludes that courage requires wisdom—the knowledge of what is good and worthy of being pursued, as well as what is evil and must therefore be avoided.

...The essence of courage ...is to pursue a goal that is morally worthy or stand up against a force that is morally repugnant—despite the risks involved.

...To know courage is to know a calling that is greater than fear.

...Courage is not the feeling that good is invincible, nor is it the conviction that evil can never prosper. Rather, courage is a march through the fear to confront what is evil and pursue what is good. Courage has a cadence. It's the wisdom to know which direction to go and the willingness to take a step in that direction. Whatever your fear, have courage. Face the direction you must go. Then take the first step. And then keep marching.

Source: God Revised: How Religion Must Evolve in a Scientific Age by Galen Guengerich



Act From the Heart

Without Love, No Courage

Barbara Bonner

Our first clue [regarding courage] lies in the word's derivation, from the Latin *cor* ..., meaning "heart." What is it to act from one's heart? ...When we act courageously, we are responding to our deepest selves, often unknown until the moment of being tested....

...Many confuse courage with fearlessness, but the courageous are actually very intimate with fear and have moved through it to the other shore.

...There is a strong element of faith in courage—faith in the truth of who we are and where that will lead us, faith in what we are doing and its importance and value in the lives of others.



Courage shows up in our lives in thousands of unexpected ways. Forgiving can be an act of courage. Reconciliation can take courage. Deciding not to fight can sometimes be as courageous as charging into battle. Activism and ferociously committing one's life to benefit others can tap into great courage. Standing up to bullies and terrorists requires courage, as does undergoing surgery and cancer treatments, and giving birth. ... There is tremendous courage in comforting the dying, asking for help, and taking great risks for great causes. Living with compassion and an open heart can also require courage of a different stripe.

...The defining core of courage is love. Without love, courage is not possible. Acts of bravado, yes—but true courage is the natural outgrowth of our love of all that we hold dear, of the preciousness of each human life, and a deep belief that what we love matters. Without love, there is nothing at stake, nothing to fight for. Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/28236>

The Will to Persevere

Hope & Courage

Liko Smith-Doo

"If you lose hope, ...you lose that courage to be, that quality that helps you go on in spite of it all," said Martin Luther King Jr. in a 1967 Christmas sermon. He was talking about the civil rights movement, but his words apply ...as well to the movement against climate change.

Mainstream media's focus on catastrophe can be very detrimental.... Even the most well-meaning journalists can oftentimes act as poison for the potential activist. This leads many to stop being able to envision a better future, instead spiraling into ...despair and undirected rage. A lot of activists say hope is the solution to despair—but hope alone will not solve climate change. We will [also] need courage to do that....

The number of situations that have been solved with courage even after all hope was lost is staggering. In 1940, after most news outlets declared the Dunkirk evacuation an unmitigated disaster, thousands of people had the courage to get on tiny boats and cross the Nazi-infested English Channel. ...When hope falters, the only options left are courage or collapse.

Courage is not something you can spread as easily as hope, but ...it is ...a powerful force for good. Courage ...is waking up every day knowing we walk on a changing earth and imagining what possibilities that entails, along with the problems that it will inevitably present.



Hope and courage are at their absolute best when they work together, with hope being a moral imperative around which a movement can unite and courage being the will to persevere even through the toughest of situations.

Source: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can_we_be_hopeful_and_courageous_in_the_face_of_climate_change

A New Way

The Broken Piano

Marti Leimbach

For [his Köln Concert on January 24, 1975, Keith Jarrett] ...requested a Bösendorfer [piano, which] ...originated in Vienna early in the 19th century. It [was] ...the first concert piano able to stand up to the playing technique of ...Franz Liszt, whose ...treatment of ...pianos ... destroyed them in short order. Perhaps the Bösendorfer's durability was the reason Jarrett requested one for the concert. [Jarrett] ...was known for ...his improvisations played with enormous athleticism and physicality. It's fair to say he was tough on an instrument....

...The piano he has been given for the concert is a Bösendorfer, ...but it is puny, ancient, totally unsuitable.

Jarrett taps a few keys and finds it ...incapable of producing enough volume for a concert performance.... The black keys don't all work. The high notes are tinny; the bass notes barely sound and the pedals stick.

...Jarrett agrees to play. Not because the piano was fixed up to the extent that he felt comfortable performing, but because he took pity on poor, young organizer Vera Brandes, just 17 years old and not able to shoulder so great a failure....

...Jarrett ...stood, sat, moaned, writhed, and pounded the piano keys. ... The Köln Concert has sold over 3.5 million copies and is [a] ...beautiful, transformative piece of music.... It makes me cry to hear it, especially if I recall the courage it took for him to perform in front of a live audience on an unplayable piano with that desperate girl in the wings, wringing her hands, hoping beyond hope that he didn't ...walk out.

...Keith Jarrett later said, "...I was forced to play in what was ...a new way. Somehow, I felt I had to bring out whatever qualities this instrument had. ...And I did." Listen to a part of the concert at <https://vimeo.com/200359565>.

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/v2/read/view.php?tid=2447>



Theme for Discussion Courage

Preparation prior to Gathering: (Read this issue of the journal and *Living the Questions* in the next column.)

Business: Deal with any housekeeping items (e.g., scheduling the next gathering).

Opening Words: "Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising that tempt you to believe your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires some of the same courage that a soldier needs. Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men and women to win them."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Chalice Lighting: (James Vila Blake) adapted (In unison) *Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law. This is our covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, to serve human need, and to help one another.*

Check-In: How is it with your spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? (2-3 sentences)

Claim Time for Deeper Listening: This comes at the end of the gathering where you can be listened to uninterrupted for more time if needed. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes, and to honor the limit of the time that you claim.

Read the Wisdom Story: Take turns reading aloud parts of the wisdom story on page 1.

Readings from the Common Bowl: Group members read selections from *Readings from the Common Bowl* (page 3). Leave a few moments of silence after each to invite reflection on the meaning of the words.

Sitting In Silence: Sit in silence together, allowing the *Readings from the Common Bowl* to resonate. Cultivate a sense of calm and attention to the readings and the discussion that follows (*Living the Questions*).

Reading: "I have come to believe that we can only discover the capacity and meaning of our courage in the context of our struggles, in how we face and inhabit

the challenges life presents to us. In this, courage is an applied art of spirit. It is not something we can manipulate, but only live into. Recovering the Source and living it out in the world, alone and together, is a lifelong devotion. One that we must, ultimately, inhabit alone, but one which we must enliven together." Mark Nepo

Living the Questions: Explore as many of these questions as time allows. Fully explore one question before moving on.

1. What did you learn about courage as a child?
2. Who were your heroes and heroines as you were growing up? Why? How did they influence you?
3. What values became important to you in adolescence and later in terms of your moral sensibilities? Did you have to defend your values? What were the circumstances? What was the result?
4. What role did fear play in shaping your attitudes and outlook? How did you overcome fear when it arose?
5. Which does our society place more value on: physical courage or moral courage? Why? What are the consequences?
6. The word courage is derived from the French word *coeur*, which means "heart." What does this suggest in terms of understanding courage and to encourage someone else?
7. In the current economic and political climate, what are the most compelling examples and the most obvious lapses of moral courage?

Deeper Listening: If time was claimed by individuals, the group listens without interruption to each person who claimed time.

Checking-Out: One sentence about where you are now as a result of the time spent together exploring the theme.

Extinguishing Chalice: (Elizabeth Selle Jones) (In unison) *We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.*

Closing Words: Rev. Philip R. Giles (In unison) *May the*



Warrior Courage

Debbie Ford

Most of us think about courage as something we do, something we think, or a decision we make. But a warrior's courage is a gift that we receive at birth. It is a level of consciousness that, whether we have experienced it or not, must be held close, developed, and savored. It is a state of being. When you are standing in and being courageous, you don't have to 'do' courage. When you are doing courage, you tend to muscle through a situation or decision.... This ...kind of courage ...is ...sourced from fear, from 'I have to' or 'I should.' Instead, a warrior's courage is poignant, purposeful, and directed toward where change needs to be made. ...You were born with this courageous warrior inside of you. In your imagination, you see her as sacred and holy, beautiful and empowered. She is filled with strength, clarity, and confidence, born ready to participate in the world, to face and conquer her fears, and to reunite with all the other powerful, playful warriors out there.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/22716>

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