

David Moul

lifeSTYLING Courage

How do we determine courage? Is it a single act or a lifetime filled with constant, yet quiet resistance to what is commonly accepted? Merriam Webster's online dictionary defines courage as "mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty." I would like to suggest, however, that courage today is so much more than this cut-and-dried definition. That it is not solely a strength, but a lifestyle, and those who choose to venture through life with this mindset achieve much more than anyone who accomplishes a single act of bravery.

As children we are often asked as conversation starters, "Who is your hero?" Frequently children answer "Batman," "Superman," "Captain Underpants," recounting the exploits of their favorite Saturday morning, action-injected cartoon. What is rarely asked, however, is "why is Batman your hero?" Surely the children would answer that Batman is their hero because he saves people, he can fly, has a stupendous Batmobile, and wears spandex. Yet I believe that beyond the veneer and flashy gadgets, children are drawn to these heroes because of their courageous lifestyles. For example, most super-heroes remain anonymous in the public eye; they accomplish feats for justice rather than for any self-satisfaction. Although superheroes can perform far beyond human capability, their appeal remains unaltered because their courage is also their lifestyle, not merely something they adorn themselves with to acquire recognition.

Imagine traveling 1800 miles from home to live in a radically different country, learn a foreign language, go to school with strangers, eat new foods, learn a new culture and social habits while living with previously unmet family. This is the life that my new brothers chose to undertake. Last November, my family had the privilege of adopting two teenage boys from Chihuahua, Mexico. The eldest, in particular has gained my utter respect as a person of courage and solidified my belief that courage is a lifestyle. As a child, he never suspected that his life would lead him to Hart, Michigan, where he would be subjected to the numerous hardships that come with adoption. In Mexico he had friends at the orphanage, relatives, comfort, security in his social role. By leaving his home, he demonstrated courage greater by far, than that of a one-time hero. Every day, when he rolls out of bed and greets my heralding with a groggy "good morning," I am struck with how courageous he is for choosing this lifestyle and for getting out of bed every day, ready to live it.

I observe courageous lifestyles in not only the everyday life, but in the "courageous" jobs as well. Examples of courageous lifestyles fall incomplete without mention of our country's numerous men and women who put their lives on the line day after day for the continuance of justice. My brothers Matt and Andy both served 4-year terms in the USMC, and together served a total of three deployments to the Middle East. I have seen and experienced the sacrifice made by choosing a lifestyle of courage and I bestow my gratitude upon them. These brave men and women do not serve for glory (for what is glorious about war?) but rather because they believe that there is honor in defending the good in life.

In conclusion, it is not the acrobatics of the physically superior, the waking hours of the lonely, or even the heroic attributes of a warrior that define their courage. Courage, rather, is a lifestyle, undertaken by the select few who I willingly call “courageous.”