

President Gerald R. Ford
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Author C.S. Lewis once wrote, “Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point.” Courage is bravery to face extreme dangers with a dauntless spirit; however, it also shows the bona fide spirit of a man or woman in the face of any pivotal circumstances. It takes no courage for a man to declare to his friends that he passionately believes in freedom, but his belief is truly demonstrated when faced with a choice to sacrifice of himself to protect liberty. True courage is tested when a soldier gives his life for his country, when a friend stands up to a bully on another's behalf, when a teenager walks away from a tempting drink at a party, or when a young woman defends her morals against a sweet-talking boyfriend. Simply believing in courage is inconsequential; acting on courage, however, unveils the heart of a man when a moral decision becomes a reality through a conscious choice to stand firm on virtue.

The scene is familiar to all high school students: in a lunchroom of hundreds, one teenager sits alone at a table near the window. While friends share good times at noon, this single adolescent feels imprisoned in loneliness and rejection. Across the room, an average student is eating with friends, updating them on the events of the day. Then, either by fate or chance, a lonely young man by the window catches her gaze. She now faces a difficult choice: pretending that she doesn't notice the rejected outsider, or putting the courage behind her kindness into practice. This single opportunity can change the life of an individual forever. It is easy to verbalize, “Of course I would be kind to another person who is feeling alone,” but to actually get out of her seat and walk across the lunchroom is a gut-wrenching choice. Corrie ten Boom was a true hero of courage when she did not think of herself first, but risked her life by helping Jews to escape capture from the Nazis during World War II. As one person stands up for what he believes in, his act of courage silently liberates others to do the same. Andrew Jackson said, “One man with courage makes a majority.”

Similar to a high school student's choice to stand up and be a friend, courage is lived out whenever someone humbly puts another above himself. Today a person of courage is sadly defined as “someone strong and tough who isn't afraid of anything.” Too often, young boys believe that to be courageous adults, they must be ready to fight whenever given the chance. This is not the heart of courage. Sometimes it takes true, sincere courage to walk away. There are times when a person is being so cruelly treated that her only desire is to seek revenge. Courage forgives. Courage loves. Courage cares about others. “Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak,” says Winston Churchill, “but also what it takes to sit down and listen.”