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What is courage? Is courage simply the lack of fear? Being perfect all the time? Is it always knowing what plan to use, and being able to execute it perfectly?

It's thundering, a loud rumble echoing through the hills and off the trees. A young man just on the brink of adulthood, the rough stubble on his chin becoming more evident with each passing day, stays inside, and his only reason for it is his unexplainable terror of a raging thunderstorm. The wind, the darkness, and the thunder only feed his fear.

Then a cry pierces the night, adding to the tempo of the storm. The cry reaches the tender portion of the young man's fearful heart, and he forces himself out of the safety of his bed and straps on his mud boots. While donning his raincoat, his mind battles a civil war. To go or not to go, that is the question.

His fingers rest on the last button of his raincoat. Listening, he doesn't hear anything outside but the rain pounding on the roof above him. He almost decides to go back to his bed when a lightning bolt flashes outside. The high-pitched wail of a terrified child is heard again just before getting swallowed by the sounds of the storm: the loud rumble that shakes the house and the ground at the young man's feet.

As he grabs the doorknob, his whole body wracks with the indecision and fear that resonates through his bones. *Whoever it is will find their way out of the storm*, he reasons.

A picture flashes through his mind, one of a frightened child, shaking and crying with terror – himself. Although he is indoors, he is still terrified of the storm that he's not outside in. Then he pictures the poor child, out there actually *in* the pouring rain, feeling the sonic waves of booms of thunder jarring his bones.

With a groan, he flings open the door and steps out of his safety bubble into the blustering gale, all the while his mind telling him to go back inside.

With no umbrella, simply a plastic-coated lightning rod, he battles his fear of the storm by being thrust into a situation where he is forced to face it. Ignoring the voice of reason in his head, he follows the voice of choice, the voice of compassion ... the voice of courage.

The young man, just a teenager, gets up early in the morning after being awakened by the sound of a child being held hostage, a prisoner of the spectre of fear. His compassion gives him courage, knowing that that's what courage is.

Courage isn't being perfect, or never being afraid. Courage is the minority standing up for itself in a hostile world. Courage is the agent on a covert mission, risking his life to protect his country. Why does he want to protect his country? Why would he willingly put himself in a precarious situation?

It's because he knows what is right, and he's willing to stand up for the truth and face his fears, his enemies, and the specters of oppression that hold sway over his life. You can show courage too by forcing yourself to do what is right in spite of fear, danger, or opposition. It's like

a man on a mission, or a few hundred men taking on thousands ... or maybe it's the man who faces his own fear to rescue a child from the storm.