

Lesson 28

Courage Makes Me Strong

TEACHER PREPARATION

KEY CONCEPTS

Courage is often associated with heroic and brave behavior, but it is important to realize it is also an inner strength.

Having courage means being willing to try new things even when it is scary.

Courage does not mean doing something just because someone dares you to do something.

Strength doesn't come from what you can do. It comes from overcoming things you thought you could not do.

A courageous person does the right thing even when it is unpopular.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. recognize courage can be physical, mental or emotional.
2. conclude courage helps us set our goals and attempt to meet them.
3. realize fear of the unknown is normal and demonstrate ways to face those fears.
4. recognize doing the right thing often takes courage.

KEY TERMS

Courage: the ability to successfully act despite fear, uncertainty or risk; the ability to face potential hardship and difficulty without being overwhelmed by fear.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Children often mistake the superhero kind of courage as the only kind of courage. It is very important for you to instill the realization courage is much more than physical strength and ability. Courage starts deep inside

our hearts. Help your students realize some of the most courageous people on earth are those, for example, who are fighting terminal illnesses with a good attitude or handling the hard situations in life without giving up.

Students need to realize courage is doing the right thing when no one else is doing it; courage is getting out of your comfort zone; courage is conquering the fear of the unknown while being mindful of safety and security; courage is recognizing sometimes we all have to do things we don't want to do ... but they need to be done, anyway.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION

1. In **Discovering the Lesson**, you will need pencil and papers for each student.
2. For **Applying the Lesson**, prepare the Writing Chart ahead of time.

LESSON

BEGINNING THE LESSON

[Say to the students:] **When we left Hector, Dugan and Trish, they were discussing the book Trish had read about Star. Star taught them about perseverance. She also taught them about courage! Let's see what our friends are doing today!**

READINESS (5 minutes)

[Read to the students:] **Chapter 28 — The Courageous Boys**

Hector's book was the next to reappear on the table. "See you guys later," he said. "I want to find out what happened to the guy who was thrown into a lions' den!"

"Sounds like a short story," laughed Trish.

"Or maybe a quick snack," added Dugan.

Hector ignored his friends and soon found a place to sit and read his book. While he read, Dugan paced back and forth between the magic table and the place where Hector sat.

When Hector finished, he looked up at his restless friend. "Quite the story!" he said.

"I sure hope the table decides to cough up my book sometime soon," lamented Dugan.

“We seem to be getting them back one at a time,” mused Hector. “Want to know what my book is about?”

“Sure!” said Dugan.

“It starts off with a bunch of very brave boys being taken prisoner and hauled off to a faraway kingdom,” began Hector.

“Wait!” said Trish, running up to join them. “I want to hear the story, too!”

“Tough way to start a story!” said Dugan. “Getting captured and all.”

“Perhaps,” continued Hector. “Anyway, they found favor in the new kingdom and were very successful. But some of the people were jealous the king liked the boys more than them. So, they plotted against them and set a trap.”

“What kind of trap?” asked Trish.

“Actually, there were many traps set by their enemies,” continued Hector. “Their foes kept making up rules that were contrary to what the boys were taught about right and wrong, and getting the king to agree to them.”

“Like what?” asked Dugan.

“Some of the traps were about what they could or couldn’t eat. And at one point, the king had a big golden statue made of himself, and his servants said that everyone should have to bow down and worship the statue. The king went along with their suggestion, but the boys wouldn’t do it. That’s when things got very hot,” laughed Hector.

“How so?” prompted Dugan.

“Well, the king threatened to have them thrown into a fiery furnace if they didn’t bow down and worship him. But they still wouldn’t do it. They said their God was powerful enough to save them, but even if he didn’t choose to do so, they were not going to deny him.

“And did the king follow through on his threat?” asked Dugan.

“He sure did! But the fire didn’t hurt them! No one could believe it! There they were walking around in the middle of the fire, totally fine. The king politely asked them to come out of the furnace. The whole episode changed the king’s heart about who anyone should be worshipping!”

“So, your book is about daring escapes?” asked the Librarian.

“Sure,” said Hector. “There was even a plot to have one of the boys thrown into a lions’ den because he wouldn’t stop praying to his God.”

“Sounds like his prayers were creating a problem for his enemies,” observed Dugan.

“I guess it all depends on who you’re praying to,” added Trish.

“Did they do it?” asked Dugan. “Did his prayer get him thrown into the lions’ den?”

“Yep,” answered Hector. “But the lions didn’t eat him and the bad guys were eaten by the lions instead.”

“So, these boys knew how to fight their way out of trouble?” surmised Dugan.

“I don’t recall a single physical fight in the entire book,” said Hector.

“But they sounded so brave and courageous,” said Trish.

“Oh, but they were,” insisted Hector.

“If they never fought anyone, how is it that they were courageous?” pressed Dugan.

“An excellent question,” added the Librarian.

Hector thought about Dugan’s question as he gathered his words. “Courage is the ability to face a difficult situation even when it would be much easier to run away or go along with the crowd.

“So, it’s staying true to your convictions,” said Trish.

“Maybe,” replied Hector. “I think it depends on what your convictions are. If you’re just thinking about yourself, you probably won’t have much of an opportunity to be brave or courageous.”

“A very wise response,” said the Librarian. “It is easy to be brave when you are walking alongside a character in a book. It is another thing entirely to be brave in your own skin out in the real world. But tell me more about courage.”

“Well, it seems to me the boys’ courage was all wrapped up in their relationship with their God,” said Hector.

“I wonder who their God is,” said Trish.

They all looked at the Librarian and she looked them right in the eye, but didn’t say a word. She only smiled.

EXPLORE (10 minutes)

[Say to the students:] **Hector said, “Courage is the ability to face a difficult situation even when it would be much easier to run away or go along with the crowd.” What do you think he meant? Doing the right thing is not always the popular thing. It takes courage to stand up for what is right ...**

especially when your friends are making fun of you for doing it. Courage is a heart word. We often think of courage as doing something brave, like a superhero, but real courage is also an inner strength. When you think about the superheroes you have seen or heard about – what comes to



your mind? A true superhero is willing to step into an uncertain situation and do his best to bring good from the situation. You know inside your heart when you are being brave. There is a superhero inside all of us – we just need to be willing to put on the cape!

What are some things that require courage in your life or in the life of someone you know? For example, sometimes when someone is very sick, it takes a lot of courage to be brave in the middle of surgery, illness and medical treatment. Sometimes, it takes a lot of courage to keep living life when a loved one has died. Sometimes, it takes a lot of courage to handle everyday life when life is hard and we don't know what is going to happen next.

It is very normal for us to be afraid when we are facing something unknown. How can we handle those fears? *[Give time for discussion. You may want to write their answers on the board. You may hear thoughts like it helps to talk about it with someone else; it helps to pray, etc.]*

DISCOVER (20 minutes)

For Younger Elementary Students

[Say to the students:] I am going to divide you into two groups. One group we will call the Easy/Hard group. The second group will be the Good/Bad group. You each have a piece of paper and pencil. Please number your paper 1-10. I will read 10 sentences one at a time. If you are part of the Easy/Hard group, I want you to think about each sentence I read and either write the word 'Easy' if you think it would be easy to do or 'Hard' if you think it would be hard to do. If you are part of the Good/Bad group, you will listen to each sentence and either write the word 'Good' or 'Bad' depending on if you think what I read would be good or bad to do.

[You might want to suggest they simply write an E or H for Easy or Hard and a G or B for Good or Bad.]

1. Get up early and study for a test.
2. Say you are sorry to someone even if it is embarrassing to do so.
3. Stand up for someone who is being bullied.
4. Be a friend to someone new in class even though everyone else is ignoring him.
5. Be willing to try to learn to speak a new language or learn to play a new instrument.
6. Try smoking with friends, so they won't call you a chicken.
7. Don't look at your friend's test for answers when you know you did not study.
8. Be honest when you know you could tell a lie and not get in trouble.
9. Don't make fun of someone who is different from you.
10. Make excuses instead of doing your work.

[Have the students Think/Pair/Share with someone from the other group. Ask what they notice after they compare their answers. They should recognize most of the 'hard' answers coincide with the 'good' answers. Lead a discussion about the realization that most of the time, doing something good is hard and takes courage.]

For Older Elementary Students

[Say to the students:] **Are you a person of courage? Let's take a quiz and find out.** *[You may want to write these questions on the board or on a large paper.]* **Answer these questions inside your heart.**

1. Do I stand up for what is right even if no one else stands with me?
2. Do I yield to peer pressure most of the time?
3. Does being afraid to fail keep me from trying new challenging things?
4. If I know someone else will disapprove of what I am thinking, am I afraid of expressing my thoughts?
5. Do I try hard to work things out without violence?

6. When someone is being ridiculed or hurt, am I willing to stand up for them?

We talked earlier about how being courageous was a heart issue and takes inner strength. What are your thoughts about the answers to these questions? *[Allow time for your students to share and discuss as a class.]* The answers you gave to these questions involve that inner courage. You also have to be practical when you think of courage. Here are some real-life considerations about courage.

- Is it moral? Does your heart tell you it is ethically right?
- Is it legal? Are you breaking a rule?
- Is it safe? Could you or someone else get hurt?

We always need to check our heart to see if what we are planning to do is the right thing to do. We also need to remember courage is not taking unnecessary risks or neglecting safety. You need to be wise about making courageous decisions.

For All Students

[Say to the students:] At the beginning of this curriculum, we discussed our goals in life. We have been learning about *DreamMakers* and *DreamBreakers* and how those character traits can affect our dreams and goals. Where does courage fit in meeting our goals? Do we need courage? Sometimes, when we think about courage, we need to remember our past successes. Think about the steps you took to meet previous goals – both simple goals and hard goals. Apply those action steps to meeting your daily goals as well as your life goals.

APPLY (30+ minutes)

[Say to the students:] Today, we are going to write a story about a superhero. It can be a make-believe story or it can be a real-life story about someone you consider to be a superhero in our world. Let's look at our Writing Chart.

Writing Chart

1. **Pick a setting.** *[You may want to have pictures of different settings like woods, city, a lake, etc. These can be pictures from magazines or pictures you have drawn under this topic.]*
2. **Pick a character.** *[You may want to draw characters or cut them out of magazines. Be sure and include some typical superhero pictures along with some people in typical life situations.]*
3. **Pick an event.**
4. **Write your story.**

[As you discuss the chart, here are some things you can say about each line.]

Look at 1. Pick a setting. Choose one of these as the main setting of your story. You may have another idea for a setting. That is fine. Your setting may change throughout the story. That is fine, too.

Look at 2. Pick a character. Think about who you want to be the main character in your story. It can be someone make believe or it may be a real person.

Look at 3. Pick an event. Choose what will be the main event in your story. How will your hero react in this event?

Look at 4. Write your story. Now that you have chosen the three main parts of your story, you may begin writing. Include these courage action steps in your story: How did your superhero get involved? What were his past successes? What steps did he take to be successful? How is he going to apply that knowledge to this event? Explain how he is going to get through this situation successfully. *[If everyone doesn't finish their story during the time allowed, encourage them to finish at home and share it with their families. You may want to invite them to bring their story back to school to share with the class on another day.]*

SHARE (15+ minutes)

[Say to the students:] **We have been learning about the strength of courage. Who is the most courageous person you know? Why do you**

consider them courageous? Think/Pair/Share with your neighbor about that person. Then, I would like for a few of you to share out loud why that person represents courage to you.

ENDING THE LESSON

[Say to your students:] We have learned a lot about courage in this lesson. I hope you realize now that courage is much more than physical strength. It is that ‘deep down inside of you’ strength! Winnie-the-Pooh is a much loved teddy bear written about in many stories by author A.A. Milne. He was a fun-loving bear who didn’t always consider consequences before he acted. He always meant well and tried to do his best ... but often got into trouble and then felt bad! His friend Christopher Robin once told him, “You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think.” Those are my words for you, too! You are braver, stronger and smarter than you ever imagined and I believe in you!

GOING DEEPER (optional)

[Say to the students:] Today, we’re going to play a game. I call it the “Preference Game.” I’m going to read a series of choices. In each case, if you prefer the first thing I mention, you will go and stand on this side of the room. If you prefer the second, you’ll go to the opposite side. In every case, you have to make a choice. If you don’t have a strong preference, you still must choose one or the other. Now, everybody stand, and I’ll read the first pair of choices. The first choice is: do you prefer the color red or the color blue? If red, go quietly to that side of the room; if blue, the other side. *[When they’ve all arrived, ask them to quietly return and stand by their seats.]*

Now, here is the second preference: fish or chicken? *[Continue with various choices until you come to one where the group is quite unbalanced, with most of the students on one side and only one or a few on the other. At that point, stop and ask one or more in the smaller group:]* Was it hard to stay over here when most of the class made the opposite choice? Why did you choose to stay on this side? *[Let one or more students respond. Here are more possible pairs:*

Loud music or soft music?

True or make-believe stories?

***Little babies or old people?
Dark hair or grey hair?
Male singers or female singers?***

[Feel free to make up your own pairs, just make sure they are preferences, not facts that would actually be true or false. When you've used as many preferences as you wish, ask all the students to sit down.]

[Say to the students:] Do you remember the preference, when only a few (or only one) were on this side? I'm not going to ask you, but I wonder if some of you who were with the larger group actually preferred the other choice. It can be really hard to go against the majority. That takes courage! It takes a little courage to stand against the group when it's a choice like preferring a color or a type of music. But when we face temptations like drugs or alcohol, it can be much harder, especially if it seems like "everyone is doing it."

Let's read our Bible verse for today. Jesus is speaking to His followers.

[Ask a student to read the passage, or for younger elementary students, read the passage to them.]

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33, New American Standard Bible).

Jesus told his followers they would face hard times (tribulation), but they could be courageous. Why did He think they could show courage in trouble? *[Let one or more students respond.]* Jesus said his followers could have courage because he has overcome the world. What did he mean? The world can still be a pretty bad place. How has Jesus "overcome the world?" *[Let one or more students respond.]* Jesus did say He would one day return, and right all the wrongs in the world. However, I think He was also saying His followers could have the inner strength and courage right now, to bravely stand against anything the world throws at them!

PARENT-TEACHER CONNECTION

This week the lesson was about courage. Here is some background information about how we approached teaching about courage. Children often mistake the superhero kind of courage as the only kind of courage. It is important for you to instill the idea that courage is much more than physical strength and ability. Courage starts deep inside our hearts. Help your child realize some of the most courageous people on earth are those, for example, who are fighting terminal illnesses with a good attitude or handling the hard situations in life without giving up.

We hope your child will understand courage is doing the right thing when no one else is doing it; courage is getting out of one's comfort zone; courage is conquering the fear of the unknown while being mindful of safety and security; courage is recognizing sometimes we all have to do things we don't want to do ... but they need to be done anyway.

Questions you might ask your child:

1. Please tell me the story Hector told his friends? (It was about some brave boys who were captured and taken as prisoners to another country. Some were thrown into a fiery furnace and one into a lions' den because they worshipped their God instead of the king. Hector said their courage seemed to be wrapped up in their relationship with their God.)
2. Please read the story you wrote about a superhero. I'd like to hear it even if you haven't finished writing it. (Accept what he or she has written and let it give you some insight into your child's thinking and feelings. If the story is not finished, simply encourage your child to finish it and tell him or her you want to hear it all again when it is finished.)
3. What does it mean to have courage? Have you ever had to be brave?

Parents, tell about a time when you needed to be brave. What happened?



