

# Dealing with Dragons



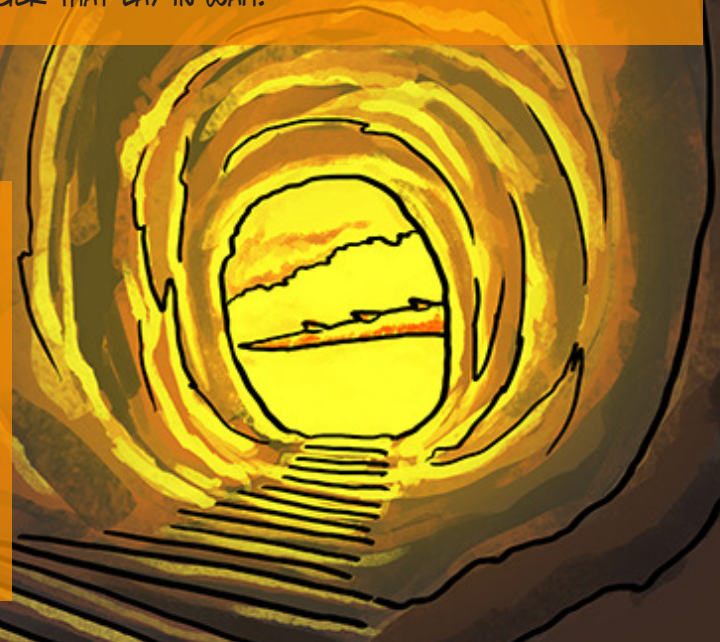
THE HOBBIT, BY J. R. R. TOLKIEN, TELLS THE STORY OF BILBO BAGGINS, A COMFORT-LOVING HOBBIT, WHO IS THRUST INTO AN UNWANTED QUEST FOR DRAGON TREASURE WITH A GROUP OF DWARVES. HE FACES ALL MANNER OF HARDSHIPS, FROM ORCS TO HOSTILE ELVES TO GIANT SPIDERS.

FINALLY, THE GROUP OF ADVENTURERS REACHES THEIR DESTINATION: THE MOUNTAIN LAIR OF SMAUG THE DRAGON. BILBO ENTERS THE DRAGON'S LAIR THROUGH A SECRET DOOR IN THE MOUNTAIN SIDE. ALL THE DWARVES ARE WAITING OUTSIDE, AND BILBO HAS TO FACE THE DRAGON ALONE. AS HE MAKES HIS WAY THROUGH THE DARK TUNNEL, HE HEARS WHAT SOUNDS LIKE A KETTLE BUBBLING ON THE STOVE. THAT SOUND GROWS INTO WHAT SOUNDS LIKE A GIANT CAT PURRING. SUDDENLY, BILBO REALIZES THAT HE'S HEARING THE SOUND OF THE DRAGON SNORING DEEP IN THE CAVE.

BILBO IS PETRIFIED. HE WANTS NOTHING MORE THAN TO TURN BACK, AND HE NEARLY DOES. BUT THEN HE DECIDES TO GO ON. TOLKIEN WRITES, "GOING ON FROM THERE WAS THE BRAVEST THING HE EVER DID. THE TREMENDOUS THINGS THAT HAPPENED AFTERWARD WERE AS NOTHING COMPARED TO IT. HE FOUGHT THE REAL BATTLE IN THE TUNNEL ALONE, BEFORE HE EVER SAW THE VAST DANGER THAT LAY IN WAIT."

HAVE YOU EVER FACED A CHALLENGE LIKE THIS--A CHALLENGE THAT SEEMED SO BIG AND SCARY THAT YOU WANTED TO RUN AWAY FROM IT? PERHAPS YOU THOUGHT, "I'M TOO YOUNG AND INEXPERIENCED TO TACKLE WHAT'S AHEAD."

DEALING WITH SCARY CHALLENGES ISN'T EASY. IT TAKES A WHOLE LOT OF COURAGE.



TO ME, COURAGE IS SIMPLY THIS: REFUSING TO ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE DEFEATED BY YOU. BEFORE YOU CAN ACHIEVE GREAT SUCCESS, YOU FIRST HAVE TO FACE DOWN YOUR OWN SELF.

SOMETIMES IT'S EASIER TO BLAME YOUR FAILINGS ON OUTSIDE STUFF. IF YOU CAN BLAME OTHERS, IT'S EASIER TO SIT BACK AND WAIT FOR THEM TO CHANGE, RATHER THAN TO CHANGE YOURSELF. THE TRUTH IS THAT FAR MORE OFTEN YOU'RE DEFEATED BY YOUR OWN NEGATIVE HABITS, ATTITUDES, MINDSETS, OR SIMPLY THE FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN.



COURAGE IS THE GUTS TO DEAL WITH WHATEVER IS HOLDING YOU BACK. IT'S REALIZING THAT YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOU, AND REFUSING TO GIVE YOURSELF ROOM TO WIGGLE OUT OF DOING WHAT'S RIGHT.

AS STRONG AS YOU ARE, OR TRY TO BE, YOU MAY AT TIMES LACK THE COURAGE THAT YOU NEED TO MEET A BIG CHALLENGE. SO WHERE CAN YOU FIND THE COURAGE TO FACE LIFE'S CHALLENGES?

JOSHUA 1:9 TELLS US, "BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS. DO NOT BE AFRAID; DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED, FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD IS WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO."<sup>2</sup>

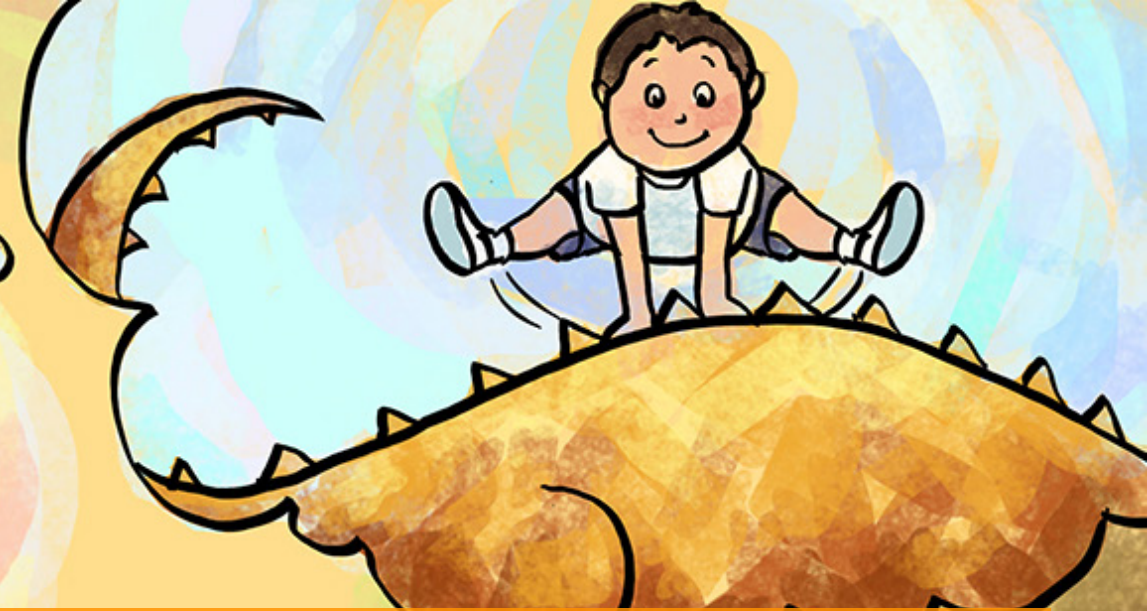
DEUTERONOMY 31:6 SAYS, "BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS. DO NOT BE AFRAID OR TERRIFIED ... FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD GOES WITH YOU; HE WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU NOR FORSAKE YOU."<sup>3</sup>

IN PSALM 31:24, KING DAVID SAYS, "BE OF GOOD COURAGE, AND HE SHALL STRENGTHEN YOUR HEART, ALL YE THAT HOPE IN THE LORD."<sup>4</sup>



YOU CAN HAVE COURAGE BECAUSE GOD IS WITH YOU. HE DOESN'T SEND YOU OUT TO FACE YOUR DRAGONS ALONE. HE'S BACKING YOU UP, NOT ONLY READY TO GIVE YOU STRENGTH AND COURAGE, BUT ALSO PROMISING TO MEET YOU THERE AND CARRY YOU THROUGH.

ACTS 1:8 PROMISES THAT "YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME UPON YOU."<sup>5</sup> GOD IS READY TO GIVE YOU THE COURAGE YOU NEED AS SOON AS YOU ASK HIM FOR IT.



ONCE YOU'VE ASKED GOD FOR COURAGE, YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE TO USE IT, EVEN IF YOU DON'T FEEL COURAGEOUS AT THE MOMENT. IT WILL BE THERE FOR YOU AS YOU STEP OUT AND BELIEVE GOD HAS THE ANSWER.

IF YOU DON'T HAVE A TON OF COURAGE RIGHT NOW, THAT'S OKAY. OFTEN COURAGE IS SIMPLY PUTTING ONE FOOT IN FRONT OF THE OTHER, TAKING SMALL, SOMETIMES EVEN TINY, STEPS FORWARD. EVERY TIME YOU MAKE A BRAVE CHOICE—EVEN IF IT'S A LITTLE ONE—YOU'RE STRENGTHENING YOUR COURAGE. THEN, WHEN BIGGER CHALLENGES COME, YOU'LL HAVE THE COURAGE TO TACKLE THEM.

SO CHOOSE TO FACE YOUR DRAGONS BOLDLY. IF YOU FACE CHALLENGES WITH COURAGE, YOU'LL BE VICTORIOUS!

#### FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> J. R. R. TOLKIEN, *THE HOBBIT* (LONDON: UNWIN BOOKS, 1937)
- <sup>2</sup> NEW LIVING TRANSLATION
- <sup>3</sup> NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION
- <sup>4</sup> KING JAMES BIBLE
- <sup>5</sup> ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION



**S&S link:** Character Building: Values and Virtues: Courage-2a  
Authored by Marie Story, adapted. Originally published on Just1Thing.  
Illustrations by Yoko. Design by Stefan Merour.  
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