

Lesson 2 Spreading Goodness

Main Reading

Mission Impossible Made Possible

On July 10th, 2018, millions of people around the world nervously watched, listened, and breathed a collective sigh of relief as 12 young boys (aged 11 to 16) and their soccer coach were miraculously rescued from a flooded cave in Chiang Rai, Thailand. It was a tale of incredibly remarkable courage and overcoming seemingly impossible odds. It read like a story that was written for a big budget Hollywood movie, except that it actually happened.

It was on June 23rd that the extraordinary events began to unfold. It started as a typical Saturday for the "Wild Boars" team. After a soccer practice, the boys and their soccer coach decided to explore Tham Luang Nang Non caves in Chiang Rai.

It wasn't their first trip to the caves, and their previous trips had always been without incident. Unfortunately, heavy monsoon rains poured down this time, creating a flash flood that trapped the team inside the complex network of caves. Desperate to escape from the rising waters, the boys and their coach went deeper and deeper into the cave, ending up in a chamber about 4 km from the entrance to the cave.

Concern began to grow when the parents of one of the boys prepared a birthday gift and cake for their son, only to realize that he had not returned home. Panic spread within and beyond the country when the boys' abandoned bikes and belongings were discovered the next day at the cave entrance, indicating that something was gravely wrong.

In response to the distressing situation, a massive search and rescue operation began. Over a thousand army and navy personnel, along with local and international volunteers, joined the search for the missing boys. After nine days of searching, two highly experienced British cave divers, Rick Stanton and John Volanthen, made a miraculous discovery — they found the boys alive. If it had not been for the two divers' exceptional skills and determination, the boys would have remained trapped deep inside the cave.

While the discovery brought hope and joy to everyone, the rescue mission was far from over. The passage they had used to enter the cave was now completely submerged, making it impossible to follow the same route back. Moreover, the boys had to dive for approximately five hours through narrow and dark waters to get out, which was an extremely challenging task even for the most proficient divers. Furthermore, many of the boys were weak from their time in the cave and most of them could not swim.

At first, the governor of Chiang Rai province thought a rescue would be "impossible." But the effort swiftly became an international collaboration with rescuers coming from countries such as the U.S., Australia, Japan, China, etc. As the skies cleared, the rescue team worked hard to pump out the floodwater from the cave, hoping that the boys could walk most of the way out if enough water was cleared.

Unfortunately, this flooded nearby farmers' fields and caused damage to their crops. Despite the losses, some farmers said they were glad to be part of the mission.

However, simply pumping out the water was not enough. The forecast predicted heavy rains in the coming days, putting the rescuers on high alert. Thus, a final but risky decision was made to take the "Wild Boars" out of the cave in groups of three or four boys at a time.

On July 8th, the mission took off. To prevent panic in the tight, underwater passages, the boys were fitted with full-face breathing masks. The divers held them close and were guided through the darkness by dive lines. After the flooded section, the boys were either carried on special beds or lifted up along ropes. After a long, nerve-wracking 11 hours, the rescue team successfully emerged with the first four boys. Four more boys were rescued the following day.

Finally, on July 10th, the last four boys and the coach were brought to safety. The world rejoiced at their rescue, and the boys and their coach were immediately transported to a hospital, where they were kept separated from others to prevent any potential infections. Once the doctors confirmed their good health, the boys were able to return home and reunite with their families.

For weeks, the world witnessed the incredible unity and collaboration of thousands of individuals from across the globe, and it was the selfless and collaborative efforts of the military personnel, cave rescue experts, divers, and volunteers from numerous countries that turned this seemingly impossible mission into a reality. There were also individuals who stepped forward to provide aid in any way they could: cooking meals for the “Wild Boars” and their rescuers, lending a helping hand with laundry, or willingly letting their fields and crops be destroyed by floodwater from the caves if it meant that the boys would be saved. Without such acts of selflessness, the rescue would not have been possible.

Extended Reading

A Long Walk to Water

Good evening. My name is Salva Dut and, for today's speech, I invite you to join me on a journey that forever changed my life.

It all began on one ordinary day in 1985 in my classroom when the sound of guns shooting broke the calm. Fleeing from the Sudanese Civil War, I became one of the Lost Boys of Sudan, enduring a tough journey for months to reach a refugee camp in Ethiopia. But our struggle didn't end there. Six years later, Ethiopia also fell into a civil war, and I found myself leading 1,500 boys on an even more difficult journey to survive. After 18 months, we arrived at a refugee camp in Kenya, but not without losses. I had lost nearly 500 friends.

But my story didn't end in despair. In 1996, I was sponsored to live with a family in New York. Then, in 2002, I received life-changing news: My father was alive although seriously ill due to unsafe drinking water. I traveled back to Sudan to reunite with him. It was an overwhelming moment of joy.

This experience fueled a new determination within me. No longer lost, I returned to the United States with a resolution to help others suffering from unsafe drinking water. In 2003, I founded Water for South Sudan (WFSS), a non-profit organization that provides access to clean and safe water in areas of urgent need. Since the installation of the first well in my father's village in 2005, WFSS has drilled 628 wells, providing clean water and benefiting over 500,000 people as of 2023.

My dream was to return home, and I believe that every person currently living in a refugee camp shares that dream — to go back home and build a better life. I am proof that it is possible to overcome adversity and make a positive impact on the lives of others. We have the power to make a difference, no matter how big or small. Together, we can create a better future for ourselves and those in need.

Critical Thinking

Unsolicited Help: Think Before You Act

Offering help without being asked, known as unsolicited help, can sometimes result in unintended consequences. Assuming someone's needs based on appearances may lead to misunderstandings or even dangerous situations. For example, imagine someone struggling to carry heavy boxes up the stairs in a subway station. Out of good intention to help, you may approach this person and try to carry the boxes. But if you are not careful, you can either drop the boxes and break the items inside or even injure yourself or others.

While unsolicited help may seem kind, it can be perceived as unwelcome or insulting. It's crucial to recognize that people value their independence and may prefer to handle things on their own. Moreover, offering assistance without proper knowledge or skills can lead to accidents and injuries.

The solution is simple: always ask first. When you notice that someone might benefit from assistance, approach them respectfully and ask them if they require help. This approach shows respect for their independence and ensures that you don't unintentionally cause harm. Remember, good intentions alone are not sufficient for unsolicited help. Take the time to assess the situation and seek consent before offering your assistance.