

WE ALL NEED HEROES

'You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending', so wrote the famous author C. S. Lewis. Recently, I wrote these exact words to an old school teacher of mine who had read my autobiography *An Unexpected Life*. He was moved by my life story and penned a thank you note, saying my story had brought him to tears. I replied with the quote from C. S. Lewis but added, to change the ending you have to start with the right tools and one of those tools is example. I thanked him for the example he gave me when I was twelve.

Up to that point of time I wasn't at all interested in learning. Life was just one big 'get out of it what you can'. I lived in the moment and never gave my future education a thought. Mr Trevor Snookes changed all that in my Form 2 year at Bairds Road Intermediate School. He introduced me to books. Because of him I learnt the school had a library, which was a rich source of knowledge. My teacher was patient, firm but kind and inspired me to work harder than I had ever done. The rewards were satisfying and grew my interest in a world of discovery.

My Rally leaders gave me an even greater spiritual example, not that I knew it at the time. It is no secret that initially I tormented them with my arrogance and selfishness, but they were patient and consistently showed me God's love. Growing up in a dysfunctional home I did not know what love was, but every Rally night I witnessed good men being the example I longed for. Little did I know that as they taught me life-skills through the badge work and at camps they were giving me an example of who I could be. They were intentionally equipping me to make life-changing future decisions. Their faithful example in explaining why and how God loved me was a pivotal time for my impressionable heart. At home I felt unloved and disrespected but at Rally I knew I was loved and valued. The example of my Rally leaders made them heroes.

Heroes are hard to define but it's their examples that make them heroes. Heroes often rise when there is a crisis. Heroes show extraordinary courage against the odds and will diligently do what is right. Hebrews ch. 11 has a list of heroes that helped shape the pages and story of the Old Testament. Faithfully they believed and served their God and in doing so became heroic examples to every believer that has since followed in their steps. This is what the children of today need – heroic examples.

At a time of crisis in my life, my heroic Rally leaders faithfully entered the dangerous streets of Otara, South Auckland, to bring the Gospel story to me and many others. Their example is my example. They were humble but dynamic heroes because their example equipped me to change my ending. Go and do likewise.

As a nation, every year on April 25, we remember and recognise the valiant heroes who fought for our freedoms. We remember them because we remain grateful to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice with their lives. Many of those who returned were scarred and traumatised by the horrors of war. They are all heroes.



Soldiers past and present aren't the only heroes among us. Every day the heroes in our midst will rise to their posts to make our lives better. School teachers, nurses, doctors, first responders, farmers and pastors will again provide the country with their skills to help people through this juncture of time. Their examples I am grateful for. They are every day, real-life heroes. We need them and we need to thank them. WE WILL REMEMBER THEM.