

Being Prepared to Step Forward

Who can name the Four Pillars of the Good Rathkeale Man today?

Today we talk about the third pillar – being prepared to step forward.

This is about seeing something that needs to happen and not waiting for someone else to do it. It means when someone asks for someone to do something, you don't shrink back and hope that someone else puts up their hand. Because society needs people who are prepared to step forward, people who are prepared to help, people who are prepared to take action and take responsibility for the community they live in. This is what leadership is all about.

I will never forget the day I needed someone to step forward for me. It's an embarrassing story for me but it illustrates my point. When I was still in my twenties and had only been married for a few years, my wife and I decided to go to Vancouver, Canada to study for a year. We lived in a basement apartment for the year, with two kids, my daughter Annika who was 6 and Bailey who wasn't even a year old. After a year of living there, it was finally time to come home, and we sold everything, packed our bags, and headed to the airport. We were so excited to be heading home to see the family we hadn't seen for so long. Once we had checked in all our baggage, we had about an hour to wait before we could board our plane, and so we spent that hour hanging out in the departure lounge.

In the departure lounge there was something called a travellator, which is an escalator which is flat – it helps you get from one place another with lots of luggage easily and is essentially an escalator. Bailey had learned to walk while we were in Vancouver and so insisted on toddling around the airport, with me following him around to look after him. He was fascinated by the travellator and kept wanting to ride on it. But he didn't want me to carry him. He wanted to ride on it himself. Now even though there were signs on the travellator saying that toddlers shouldn't be allowed to stand on it, I still let him ride on it and stood right behind him, ready to grab him.

Bailey loved riding on the travellator and was having a great time. Until it got to the end, where the metal floor that moves goes under the floor and back around again. When we got to the end, Bailey fell over, onto his hands, and his finger must have got caught in the end, because he screamed. It all happened so quickly that I didn't have time to grab him before he fell. But I quickly picked him up when he started screaming. As soon as I did all I could see was a lot of blood and exposed flesh where his finger was. I don't know a lot about injuries. But it looked pretty bad to me. And all I could think was that I didn't want my little boy to lose his finger. I remember I whipped off my t-shirt and wrapped it around his hand and just started running the long way back to the help desks where I thought there might be someone who could help me. As I ran, I started to yell: "Can someone help me please. I need first aid. My baby's injured, someone please help me!" I kept running down the terminal, scanning the crowd,

looking for someone, anyone, to help me. I was terrified. I didn't know how bad Bailey's injury was, I didn't know how to help him, I didn't know what to do. But no one offered to help. People just stared at me and backed away, and I could see the blood beginning to seep through the t-shirt wrapped around Bailey's hand. And I began to yell even more desperately, "Please! We need help, my baby is hurt, and needs first aid, someone please help me." But still, all I was getting was silence, and people looking away and moving away from me. What I learned later was that the laws in Canada are quite different to ours. Apparently, if you get involved in a medical emergency, and you aren't trained in first aid, and you do something wrong in helping that person, you can be sued. So later on I understood why no one would step forward and help me, but it was still the loneliest, most helpless 2 minutes of my life, as I ran down an airport terminal, holding my bleeding child, crying out for help, facing only blank faces and silence.

Until eventually one lady stepped forward. "I don't know first aid and I don't know what to do, but I'll help you," she said. And then I wasn't alone. She got someone in a shop to call for the first aid team. She stayed with me until the paramedics arrived. She didn't do anything special, but it made a huge difference to me. Unfortunately, we had to miss our flight and take an ambulance to the hospital. And while there was no major, long-term damage, Bailey will never be able to fulfil his dreams of being a hand model.

So, Boys I know how it feels when you just need someone to step forward. And there are people everywhere, who just need someone to step forward. The person with the flat tire on the side of the road in the pouring rain. The elderly person who is wandering around looking confused and a little lost (usually Mr Vundy). The person eating their lunch by themselves. A Chaplain asking a question in chapel.

I want you all to think of a situation, maybe one that has happened recently, or one that you can imagine happening, where this school would be made a better place, if someone would just step forward.

Now who is prepared to step forward and tell me what some of those situations are:

To finish, boys, we all need to be the change we want to see. If you wish Rathkeale was a more fun place to be, then you need to organise something fun at lunchtime. If you wish it was a friendlier place, then you need to go out of your way to be friendly to someone who looks like they need a friend. We are society, we are the system. If you don't like the system, or if you think it could be better, then just be prepared to step forward, because that is what the world a better place, and that is what it means to be a Good Rathkeale Man.