

## **Headmaster's Address Nelson College Assembly 18 August**

At times in assemblies throughout the year we will take a moment to move away from the day to day events and celebrations in the College and look at broader and perhaps more profound issues and questions.

Given the publicity surrounding the brawl between players and supporters at the Kelston BHS / Auck Grammar 1<sup>st</sup> XV game on Saturday and the sheer volume of violent incidents in our everyday life ...  
it is perhaps the right moment to consider our attitude and role as men in society

If we were to ask a man to list some of the attributes that he might wish to be remembered for  
I believe two of them would be

### **"STRENGTH AND HONOUR"**

Understanding what these words mean to us as men is extremely important –

A 'false view' of what they mean contributes to many of the daily incidents we see and read about where violence is the preferred method of dealing with life ....

– fights between supporters of teams, physical abuse of children and partners in families, verbal abuse of officials and the list goes on ....

None of these are acceptable .... and much of this is because of our lack of understanding of what true strength and honor actually mean

#### **Strength**

As men we all wish to be seen by others as being strong

Unfortunately too often the concept of a strong man is linked with aggression and violence.

In reality violence and aggression, whether verbal or physical, is a sign of weakness and cowardice, not strength.

Do we admire and respect a violent man

or do we just fear and despise him

Do we understand the paradox of being a truly strong man

Do we understand that much of that strength is shown in gentleness & tenderness to those we love and in integrity and respect for others

Very little of true strength has anything to do with muscles and a 'hardcore attitude'

Many of us play and have played full contact sports –

Our own emotional control in that contact area is vital

- hard uncompromising play is required and accepted  
but aggression and violence is unacceptable

In this school aggression and violence is not part of our accepted culture and the consequences a lack of control and an inability to behave or play in an appropriate way will not be tolerated

#### **Honour**

Perhaps put most simply

honour is "doing the right thing" –

so what does behaving honourably mean  
and have we as men confused "mateship" and  
being accepted in a group or gang .....  
with having honour and being honourable  
and that doing the 'right thing' now means doing what the gang or group says is  
right?

- Are we admired and respected because we lie to protect our mates when they have done wrong?
- Are we admired and respected because we stand by when one boy is bullied and beaten?
- Are we admired and respected because we allow a mate to drive his car if he has been drinking.
- Are we admired and respected because we run into a fight between two people --  
--- not to break it up but to inflame the situation and to get our own 'cheap  
punch in' - and then justifying the violence by kidding ourselves that this is  
about 'protecting our mates' ... a warped sense of honor

These are questions & choices that are not confined just to you as young men

adults also grapple with decisions like these and feel the same pressures and hear  
the same conflicting messages in attempting to do what is right

We all know that doing the right thing is never easy

### **Strength and honour**

Today I pose the same question for each of you .....  
When the time comes for you to make a difficult decision,  
will you have the strength to take the right and honourable path  
because if you do you will be admired and respected for it

College stand