

Takes One to Know One

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Command Chaplain

If you have been around children for any length of time, you probably have heard at least one argument. There are several phrases that have been a part of very nearly every argument where children have been involved. One is, "You're not the boss of me." This expresses one child's contention that the other cannot direct their actions or tell them what to do. Another is, "Takes one to know one." This usually follows one child calling another one an unkind name. I'm not sure who started using these expressions, but they seem to have found their way into very nearly every child's list of retorts.

The whole concept behind the second phrase is that the only way we can know something is to experience it for ourselves. There are certain elements of this argument that I tend to agree with. I think it is possible to understand some things on an intellectual level, but we can never have a total understanding until we have been there for ourselves.

This is the whole concept of the Chaplaincy. Research has indicated that most military members are more willing to speak with a military chaplain than they are a civilian clergy person because they feel the chaplain has a better understanding of them as a military member. Generally, this is true because we experience the same things as other members of the military. We deploy, go to the field, eat the same chow, and experience combat.

Most people tend to relate best to people just like themselves. When we are from the same area of the country, we share a vocabulary and culture that may be a challenge for someone from another region to understand. People from a large metropolitan area have a different view of life than those from a rural or agricultural background. We are naturally more trusting and accepting of other people from a culture like our own.

This seems to be a lesson that many churches forget from time to time. Many churches decide that they would like to either evangelize or at least minister to specific groups in society, but they do not have the proper background for truly understanding them. We tend to want to make someone else into a copy of us. That way, we can relate to them more easily. However, we are generally far more effective at reaching a group when we already have a background that makes it easier for us to identify with them. We may have great intentions for wanting to extend our spiritual experience with different groups, but most of us lack the training or background to do so.

The best thing to do is generally to look at those closest around us. Our neighbors usually have a lot in common with us. We are either of the same socio-economic group, or we work together, or at least have children who attend the same school. We can most easily relate to those who share experiences common to us. The same is true to the people with whom we work.

Develop a vision for reaching people for the purpose of sharing your spiritual experience, but try beginning with those that we already have much in common with. You will find it to be easier and much more fruitful.

Semper Fi in the Lord and I hope to see you in Church on Sunday.