

Air Force Chaplain's Thought on Marines

Last Thursday morning I was one of more than 300 runners in the NSA Armed Forces Week 5K run (Ft. Meade, MD). It was pretty crowded at the start, but things thinned out after about five minutes or so, and I took my bearings. Perhaps 200 yards ahead of me was a group of maybe 8 Marines or so who were obviously running together. I decided that a good goal would be to beat them, which seemed reasonable as I am a macho Air Force Chaplain and they were only a bunch of United States Marines. I kept them in sight for the next couple of miles, but the longer the race went on, the younger those guys got. It became apparent to me in the last half mile that I was not going to catch them, and I resigned myself to finishing well behind them.

Then I noticed that one of their number was struggling and was gradually dropping off the pace. I panted out a word of encouragement as I caught him and realized that he was not about to give up. Within 100 yards of the finish line I saw a strange sight. The entire group of Marines made a u-turn in the road and were running back towards me. As they ran past me I noted their well-chiseled muscles and the determined set of their jaws. I glanced over my shoulder in time to see them rally around their buddy to provide the emotional support of the team so that they could all finish together.

I was impressed. No way would they leave a struggling comrade behind. As I entered the finishing chute I murmured a prayer. "God, I'm glad those guys are on our side." And so it was that I learned a theological truth from the U.S. Marines that is as vivid as any my seminary professors ever taught.

"If anyone . . . sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth." 1 John 3:17,18

Last Thursday I witnessed "a few good men" in action. They reminded me of the strength of being a team, and that words without actions are pretty much useless.

Thanks, Marines.

Chaplain Johnson (LtCol, USAF)