

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

46. How Tandem Bicycling Is a Little Like Following God

You are listening to episode 46 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast, titled, "How Tandem Bicycling Is A Little Like Following God." Thanks for tuning in today, friend. I'm happy you're here. Are you more of a leader or a follower? Neither answer is right or wrong, but some of us are just simply wired one way or another. Well, in this episode, I share some of my experience of tandem bicycling and how that relates to following, and more specifically, following God. If you're not into bicycling, that's completely fine, you don't need to be. Because that's not the focus on this episode. But we'll find some help and hope and a whole lot of encouragement in this episode on how we can follow God wholeheartedly in our every day lives. So, let's get to it.

Remember that lively and fun game we used to play as kids? Follow the Leader? Where everyone does what the leader does, or at least tries to?

Well, my husband and I are tandem bicyclists and we are training for a big bicycle ride across our state the end of July, called RAGBRAI. And lately I feel like I'm following the leader on the back of our tandem, which we affectionately call Big Blue. Because I simply just follow where Bill leads. I don't have another option. In tandem bicycling, the Captain, the front person, leads. The Stoker, the back person, follows. So, I'm having lots of experience playing this childhood game! Allow me to explain.

Bill, the Captain, steers our bike, he shifts gears, he applies the brakes, and he warns me of any upcoming bumps and dips (because on the back of a tandem you can't see those so well and they don't feel so good when you hit them back there). He let's me, the Stoker, know when we're slowing, stopping, and coasting, so I can pause my peddling. Pretty much all I do is pedal, be another set of eyes and ears on the bike, and take photos. Because to me, the most important piece here is taking photos!

We've been tandem bicycling for eight years now, so we've got this thing down. I can pretty much anticipate Bill's actions and his leading, and through experience, we know each other's habits and preferences when it comes to bicycling. I'd say Team Lefebure makes a pretty amazing tandem team!

At first, however, it wasn't so easy. We experienced a big learning curve. Having to learn riding together on the same bicycle was a challenge in itself. We soon found out how much we needed to communicate, which was everything, And I mean *everything*. We had to get used to pedaling in sync and finding our cadence together. Staying upright was our goal, and that alone felt like a challenge. Those early tandem bicycling days were rough. And it's now wonder we were warned ahead of time that whatever direction our marriage was going, either good or not-so-good, a tandem bicycle would take us there faster!

But what might have been the most difficult for me was getting used to following, which wasn't so easy. Because frankly, I kinda like to lead.

Leading is just how I'm wired, I guess. It's naturally what I want to do.

Following doesn't come so natural to me.

On the bike or in my walk with God.

I've been known to struggle with God, but I've learned the hard way that following Him is best. Why? Well because He knows best. He sees the big picture, where I do not. He understands what's ahead for me, where I do not. And He has my best interest in His mind, while sometimes I just want what feels comfortable and easy.

So, following God's leading has been a process for me. But after time and experience, it's now what I focus on daily. It's now what I desire to do.

The other evening on our tandem, however, I had this revelation.

Tandem bicycling is a little like following God.

How? Well, as we discussed in last week's episode, episode 45, life is one big adventure with God. In this life I can easily picture in my mind each of us on a tandem bike ride with God. As our Captain, He takes us on all sorts of adventures and expeditions. Sometimes to grand mountain-top views where we can hardly contain our joy, and sometimes through low valleys that are difficult to peddle out of. Our Captain steers, brakes, shifts gears, and warns us of what's ahead.

You and I, as the Stoker, get to partner with God in pedaling, paying attention, and capturing some amazing moments along the way. It may not be easy at first, but the more experience riding with God, the more we realize how trustworthy of a Captain He is. Over time we learn to follow His ways and His rhythm.

Before long, we've got this thing down. Our peddling is in sync, our cadence is comfortable, and we finally get to relax a bit and enjoy the ride. We are one smoothly flowing pair making our way down the road, off on another adventure together. Our team is pretty amazing, isn't it??!!

It's no wonder following God becomes our preferred way to live.

Following God, our Captain, allows us to forego being in control. When we let God lead, we find rest. We realize it's kinda nice not being in charge. We let God be God, and we simply follow and pay attention. Because we can trust God will not lead us astray. Our leader is capable, trustworthy, experienced, and He knows the terrain well. He will lead us home safely.

And yes, we get to enjoy the ride and take some photos along the way.

So, how about you, friend? How are you doing in following our Captain? Are you and I partnering with God on this adventure of life? Is there any ways we're struggling in letting our Captain lead? Are there any changes or adjustments we could make as the Stoker?

God cares that we arrive to our destination safely and securely. And He'll do everything He can to make that happen.

Now, I know tandem bicycling isn't referenced in the Bible at any point, but following God is mentioned often.

What does God have to say about you and me following Him?

Here are three verses I found to encourage us:

Once again Jesus spoke to the people. This time he said, "I am the light for the world! Follow me, and you won't be walking in the dark. You will have the light that gives life." John 8:12 CEV

You are to follow only God, your God, hold him in deep reverence, keep his commandments, listen obediently to what he says, serve him—hold on to him for dear life! Deuteronomy 13:4 MSG

When people's steps follow the Lord, God is pleased with their ways. Psalm 37:23 NCV

Following God doesn't have to be so complicated. He leads and we follow. That's why when I picture Him as my tandem Captain, it helps me remember He's leading and I'm partnering with Him on this adventure. It helps me to think of following God in a new light.

But is there anything you and I can do to help us follow God? I believe so.

Here are 5 Things to Help Us in Following God

(that also pertain to tandem cycling).

1 - Pray.

On our own it's not always easy to follow God if we don't know where we're going. Praying helps us do that. Simply asking God to help us follow Him and to trust Him wholeheartedly makes all the difference.

2 - Allow God to lead.

When we allow God to lead, we can rest in the following. We can relax knowing the pressure is off because we don't have to be in charge. Allowing God to lead will make the adventure much smoother and a lot more enjoyable.

3 - Stay alert.

God will guide us in the direction to go, plus He'll navigate the terrain on the journey. He sees what we cannot, and He knows the best route. So, staying alert will help us be sensitive to God's leading and promptings as we go. This reminds me of one of my favorite Bible verses, and I've shared it before. Proverbs 3:5-6 in the Message translation says: Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track.

4 - Partner with God.

We aren't just along for the ride, but we have our own part to play on this adventure with God. We may not know exactly our part to play when we start out, but He will let us know. What joy we will find as we partner with Him along the way!

5 - Enjoy the scenery.

And of course, as we travel, let's not forget to enjoy the views and the scenery around us. God will show us some amazing sights and will enable us to find some new experiences. Let's be sure to lift our eyes often, and if we have our cameras with us, take a photo every now and then.

God knows how to lead us on this adventure.

Come on over to our Encouragement for Real Life Community where we are discussing following God a little further this week. You 'll find our space full of hope and encouragement. The link is in the show notes.

And if you've found some encouragement here, please rate and/or review this episode and subscribe to the podcast so you never miss an episode. Others will be able to find this encouragement thanks to you.

In case you are looking for additional encouragement, look no further! The Free Resources on my site are designed to encourage your heart and add a lift to your step. You can find the link to these freebies (such as lock screens, social posts, bookmarks, and other helpful and inspiring printables) in the show notes as well.

Following God doesn't have to be complicated, just like tandem bicycling doesn't have to be. Sometimes it's all in our attitudes, and that can make all the difference. It's a good day to thank God for leading us on this adventure and that we don't have to find our way on our own. Enjoy the journey, my friend, and keep peddling! God bless you!

Julie Lefebvre