

The Team Time Trial

I owned a bike shop for about 20 years and also coached a shop affiliated cycling team. A customer came into the store and announced he was going to be on a cycling team doing a time trial as part of a corporate sponsorship event. The Team Time Trial is a timed event where a group of riders works closely together against the clock. The TTT can be a beautiful event to see - Much like a ballet on wheels. While I knew all these riders were very fit, I knew they had never participated in the bike training rides we sponsored that practice this type of drafting. They all specialized in solo timed events and generally rode alone because they were busy men and lived many miles from each other. I asked when they would be practicing as a group and the rider explained that they would not have time to get together to practice before the event but would each continue their own rigorous personal training.

I recalled my own progression in cycling where I originally could not figure out why all these riders were riding so close together, only inches from each other's rear wheels. I remembered that I very fortunately got in with a club of riders and they taught me drafting, how to point out hazards on the road and to shout when cars or other dangers were ahead. Sometimes a better rider would ride up alongside me and point out the technique I was in error on. Well OK – sometimes they yelled at me because they were drilling techniques into me. It was a bit embarrassing as I had to submit my will to someone else but soon I was able to ride in these close formations at speeds that I had never realized were possible. Those of us that had this knowledge and experience were glad to share it freely with others as it had been entrusted to us. On group rides we could quickly recognize riders who had not been coached properly. They might own an expensive bike, have on all the proper gear and be in good shape but they made sharp unpredictable movements and made all those around them nervous. We knew that if an accident happened they would likely be the cause or its victim.

Mondays are always busy in the bike business because you get to see all the bikes that need repairs from the weekend of riding and this Monday was no exception. My rider friend came in with his broken bike and he had one arm wrapped in a large bandage. I learned that he had come out the best on the accident that had occurred only a short distance from the start. The other riders were each convalescing at home in various states of broken collar bones and road rash. As I had feared, they had overlapped wheels while at speed and touched. The chain reaction crash had taken all but one of them down in a heap of twisted bikes and bodies.

I guess that I have begun to realize that in life just as in cycling that as we grow a part of that growth involves growing others. It is not a separate process but a single process. To grow I must be growing others. Cautioning, encouraging, exhorting, pointing out the hazards, sharing my experiences are all part of the growing experience for me. When I see someone who is struggling for balance I need to reach out and encourage them, "You can do it! Sit on my wheel for a while and rest while we work on this together." Paul put it well when he wrote:

^{2TI 2:1&2} You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

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