

Strengthening Your Marriage While Coping With Heartbreaking Loss

Loss comes in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes it can be a job, a move, a close friendship, losing your church family or even the loss of your health. Maybe like us, you have lost a loved one. We lost our daughter three years ago.

Loss changes your marriage. At the very least, for a long time and sometimes forever.

We grieve differently. We cry at different times. We get strength from different rituals. Our bodies, minds and spirits respond to this loss in different ways. We are healing at different paces.

It doesn't mean that one of us loves her more than the other, we just differ. We figured out pretty quickly to "defer (to commit or to entrust another) in our differences."

A tandem bike? What does that have to do with marriage?

This week, we took our brand new tandem bicycle out on the road. Riding one of these is a great picture of marriage. This is truly learning to defer. Only the person in the front seat can decide when to turn, speed up or slow down. They are the one who has the greater responsibility and does most of the work. Why then is it so difficult to sit in the back?

We proudly rode that bicycle all around our neighborhood last night and just before we got back to our porch, the chain broke. Tomorrow, it goes back to the shop for needed repairs.

We bought this bike because of a memory. About 20 years ago, our much younger selves and all five of our kids were riding in our minivan. They were fighting in the back seats while we

were fighting in the front.

We stopped at a red light, and an older couple on a tandem bicycle, passed in front of us. I remember thinking they were elderly but truthfully, they may have been in their 50s or 60s. (Which seems young and spry to me now.) Both of them were in Spandex bike suits and should not have been! They wore the whole gear, from helmet to gloves to unitard, and all in neon colors.

The first thing we noticed, after the Spandex, was their faces. He was out front, red-faced and obviously exerting all the effort. He seemed to be sucking air for fuel to keep going and sweat was pouring down his face. Now she, on the other hand, seemed to be enjoying the view. She was looking at the scenery and waving at the traffic. It appeared she didn't notice the difficulty her husband was having as he worked for both of them.

Our kids were pointing and giggling when one of our children shouted, "Look down at the bottom of the bicycle!" All of our eyes left the neon accouterments, traveled down the bicycle and noticed her feet strapped to the pedals. Metal crutches were attached to the side of the bike. She really wasn't pedaling and there was apparently a good reason. In that season of their life, on that bicycle, he was doing all the work.

Ever felt like you were doing all the work in your marriage?

We have often thought of that picture through the years. Sometimes we have even walked or should I say, pedaled that picture out. Losing our daughter has been one of those times. We take turns pedaling. Sometimes the grief is too much for him, and I sit in the front and pedal. Other times, I simply sit and watch the countryside while he pedals with all of his might.

In every marriage, there are times or seasons when one partner

seems to be doing all the work. There will be times in your relationship that you will need to take the front seat for your spouse and pedal for both of your lives. There will be times that your partner needs to pedal for you. When either happens, thank God that you are strapped to your marriage covenant and know that you are still in this together. Ask for the strength to pedal until God grants your partner the strength to pedal again. Give thanks when they start to pedal for you and rest in their care. Always ask your Heavenly Father to light the path so that you move in the direction that He has laid out for you.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 "Two are better than one, because there is a good reward for their labor together. For if they fall, then one will help up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has no one to help him up." {eoa}

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