

## **Your Encouragement Changes People's Lives**

I read a fascinating article recently from Bicycling.com about a cyclist I do not know personally, but who lives in St. Petersburg and rides with the St. Petersburg Bike Club. He was an extremely fit guy in his late 40's who regularly rode with the 25 mph group. Over a period of weeks, he began to lose his edge. He felt tired and struggled to keep up with his group. He had no specific symptoms of an illness, which would have otherwise alerted him he was ill. However, after consulting with his physician, he was diagnosed with an aggressive form of leukemia that is often fatal.

He described how his doctor was thrilled when he realized just how fit he was from his years of cycling. The oncologist expressed optimism that due to his fitness he could withstand the strongest chemotherapy treatment they offered. And they gave it to him!

He described months of wondering whether he was going to die from the effects of the treatment, but he made it through and was able to return to light cycling after a few months. Eventually, he built up his stamina and was absolutely ecstatic to rejoin his riding group.

While this is a great story of overcoming adversity, what touched me was how members of his bike club supported him throughout his period of illness. They visited, they called, they sent notes and, no doubt, they prayed for him. He could feel their encouragement and it made a world of difference in giving him hope, optimism and a realization he was not suffering through his illness alone. In short, his friends showed up in a powerful way when he needed them the most. What more can friends do?

I have the good fortune of associating with many bike clubs throughout the state. I'm constantly struck by the genuine friendships so evident in every club. I have come to realize it is not all about the riding. It is just as much about the people we choose to associate in our lives while on the bike.

This story is a reminder to each of us about the power of encouragement. It's about showing up when friends need us, even though we are not sure what to say or that our words seem adequate. We need to keep an important truth in mind: our friends will not always remember what we said to them when they needed us, but they will always remember how we made them feel. Friends are called to be there in the difficult times. Scripture reminds us "there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Never underestimate the power of your encouragement; even if it's just showing up.

Source: "How the Pack Mentality Kept Me Alive Through Chemo," by Eve Edelheit, [Bicycling.com](http://Bicycling.com), June 10, 2019.

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