

Tour de Trust

Why did I sign up in the first place? I've ridden thousands of miles on bike but have never raced, let alone raced at 7500 feet in the mountains with a 3000 foot incline over its 50-mile course. Such was the Tour of Big Bear CA that I bungled into last week.

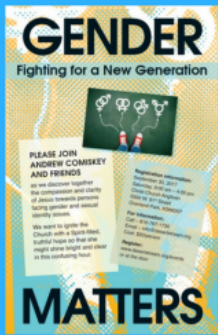
We had gathered in that resort town for a family gathering—kids, Annette, and her side of the family who own a hotel there which sponsored the race. How hard could it be, I thought?

Maybe I was lulled into a false peace by my son Nick who tends to win most competitions. (Yes you heard it here; he places FIRST) As I observed him flying around Big Bear prepping for this race with removable pedals molded to shoes and those skin-like outfits, I woke up. At the midnight hour, I realized I knew next to nothing about racing. Nick kept giving me little tips like: 'You probably need a bike with thinner tires' (the bike secured for me was thick, with fat tires); 'You cannot listen to music on a race' (what, no worship music to drown out my fears? And apparently the roar of riders and cars on steep narrow mountain passes?); I did not even know where to secure my number on the bike.

On the morning of the race, I cobbled together a strange outfit more fitting for running (that's what I know) than the sleek world of bike-racing. Combined with my fat bike, I felt like an alien, the kid from the country who transfers into your sixth grade class, hapless and eager. And scared. Then I thought: 'Well, I am an alien. I am so outside my game.' Then it got fun. 'OK God, You love aliens. Check. You give strength to weak ones. Check. You won't let me tumble down the mountain. Check...' (I deleted actual tragedies from my memory bank.)

Well, some fear can be is a good thing. It drives you to God and empowers you to go where you might not otherwise. The race was on and I found my stride after about 90 minutes of, well, terror. The first part was exceedingly hard, way up and way down with tons of vehicles everywhere. I focused on a few people who traveled ahead of me: mostly Asian and Hispanic (cool CA diversity) who were responsive to my lame 'looking good' encouragements (supporting them was insurance against my free-fall). I noticed a couple of guys coming alongside their girls and supporting them in the climb. (Sexist maybe; I thought them noble.)

Anyway, as we rode back from Snow Valley to Big Bear, I loosened up enough to see the hills (they help us right, King David?), 8500 feet of help, something God uses to call us up and out of ourselves into marvels that fear might obscure forever. During the fourth and last hour of the race I began to jam, an alien with wings, grateful for the race.



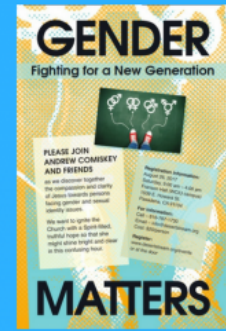
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