



I KNEW THAT VOICE

*At the triathlon,
an unexpected
voice cut
through the
noise of the
crowd.*

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The summer before my senior year in high school, I decided to participate in my hometown's Olympic-length triathlon. I had always been a runner, so the 10-kilometer run portion didn't worry me too much. And I liked cycling, even though 40 kilometers seemed like a long time to be on a bike. What I was really concerned about was the 1.5-kilometer swim, but as I trained over the summer, I became more confident in all three events.

The night before the race, my dad helped me set up my swim-to-bike transition. We made sure everything was placed just right so I could get to biking as quickly as possible after I got out of the water.

At 7:00 the next morning, I jumped into the cold river to begin the race. In less than 30 minutes I was out of the water and getting ready to begin the bike course.

Thousands of people were competing, and even more people were there to cheer the racers on. I knew my family members and friends were along the course somewhere, but I didn't know where, and I didn't think I could pick their voices out of the large cheering crowd surrounding the transition zone. Just as I was about to hop on my bike, a voice cut through the noise.

"Heather, the chain is off your bike. Heather, put your chain back on. The chain is off your bike."

It was different from all the other voices that were yelling and cheering the triathletes on. That voice stood out to me because I knew and trusted that voice. It was the voice of my high school cross-country coach. I looked down, and sure enough, my chain was off. I quickly put it back on and began riding. A few hours later I had successfully completed my first Olympic-length triathlon.

Had I not heard my coach, I would have figured out pretty quickly that the chain was off my bike. But I probably would have figured it out with my right foot clipped into my pedal pushing down hard to get my momentum going. Without the anticipated resistance from my chain plus the fact



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that I was accident-prone, I most likely would have fallen over onto the pavement. It wouldn't be a race-ending or even a serious injury, but I would have had a skinned-up knee and elbow, along with a big hole poked in my confidence. I was grateful for my coach.

I had spent many, many hours at cross-country practice listening to his instructions. If we spend time where the Spirit is present, we will know what He sounds like. When we attend church and seminary, study the

scriptures, or watch uplifting media, and we pay attention to how we feel, we are then ready to discern the voice of the Spirit from the other voices and feelings we are exposed to.

When we take the time to learn to recognize the voice of the Spirit and then follow His promptings, we avoid pain—of all types—and we are able to make more efficient progress on our eternal journey. If we mess up, we can always pull the gravel out of our knees and get back on our bike. But isn't life so much more pleasant when we can avoid things like that?

Swimming, biking, and running for a total of 51.5 kilometers—even without picking gravel out of my knees—pushed me toward my physical limit and helped me grow. Mortality will do the same thing to us—we don't need to make life more challenging by ignoring the promptings of the Spirit.

That day on the triathlon course, my parents were at the race supporting me, but they couldn't be everywhere. I needed help from someone else (in this case, my coach) who saw what I didn't notice. The Spirit can be that someone for us wherever and whenever we are worthy and willing to listen. And if we listen and obey, we will successfully "run . . . the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). **NE**