I rode the 3Gap50 last weekend. This is a bicycle ride in the North Georgia Mountains that climbs over three mountain passes. Spinning those pedals to keep moving over those mountains was very difficult but to finish the challenge was worth the effort. I don’t think I would have finished the day without some solid companionship and understanding from my friend Shaun.

Coupling takes a lot of leg work, too. Sometimes it is painful, maybe you feel you can’t go any further. But the view from the top washes away the pain of the climb. Relationships always need a heavy dose of loyalty and commitment. Sometimes that can get thin as we make mistakes or selfish choices. That selfishness then feels like betrayal or abandonment to the partner who was wronged or hurt.

We may think we can justify our actions, rationalize our reasons for selfish choices, maybe even minimize the event as a whole. But we make a mistake when we don’t see the mistake from the other’s point of view. We are in error when we excuse or ignore their reaction by making an excuse for our behavior.

Words rarely suffice when a poor choice has been made. Apologies can come across as empty, only making a bad situation worse. Even flowers can be seen as a manipulative way to cover or gloss over your mistake. Another friend tells me that nothing says ‘shut up’ like diamonds!

It takes a lot of legwork to climb the heights of your strong and scenic relationship. Apologies, flowers and gifts are helpful, but some how we have to make the words real, put some feet on those ideas.

Recently, a man told me that he had gotten very nasty with his wife, said and did some terrible things and now they are separated. They are working on healing that painful wound for her. He said, “I don’t want to take my wife for granted any longer. I want her to know everyday that she is the most important thing to me.”

His words are instructive. You don’t take someone for granted. You value and honor them. This has to be a daily exercise of care and attention.

“Sorry” can be a poor excuse for an apology. That word can be too quick and easy. Making amends is what we need to try to do. The word ‘amend’ carries with it the idea of mending something. If you have messed something up, you don’t just say, “I’m sorry” and go about your business. Somehow you have to make it right.

Taking responsibility for having wronged your partner is a good place to start, but it has to be thoughtful and meaningful. Then you can move on to making it right. Gifts, service, quality time, kind words or loving touch can all help, but if you ruined the weekend then you better plan an even better weekend.

The goal is to keep climbing until you make it to the top. Determined legwork will get you there, and then you come coasting down the other side enjoying the view and the cool breeze.