

South Asia: Auto-rickshaws and following Jesus

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Since I have been here in South Asia, I have discovered everything is completely different from anything I've known before. The language, food, architecture, culture, people, dress and the transportation all are different than in the States.

For instance, in the United States, we have a lot of traffic laws and regulations to promote order, safety and peace of mind among citizens. In South Asia, there are some traffic laws, but most of them aren't followed because there are millions of people trying to get where they need to go. There are four lanes of bumper-to-bumper traffic—I actually can touch the vehicle next to mine—and lots of honking horns, and we zoom in and out of cars like in an action film. Now, this doesn't make it bad or wrong, but it's very different from what I have known and am accustomed to.

One of my new favorite forms of transportation is the auto-rickshaw. You can hop in, try to tell them where you want to go, negotiate a price, and they drop you off. No need for your own car for local errands. Sometimes, drivers will wait on you as you run inside stores and shops, and the same driver runs all of your errands with you. They are very convenient and pretty cheap transportation.

As I was riding in one and praying, it hit me that riding in an auto-rickshaw is an awful lot like following Jesus Christ.

First, I have to flag down a driver, but the thing is he has been looking for me, a customer in need of a way to get where I want to go. When I begin to tell him where I want to go, there usually is miscommunication between the two of us, and I don't always get to go where I had originally wanted.

Sometimes it's because of my own mistake or lack of knowledge. But sometimes, it's because the driver knows there's a better shop for that one item I'm seeking.

I've seen this in my own walk with the Father. I think I am telling God where I am going in life, but usually, I end up going along for the ride and saying 'Yes,' because I know in the end, I'm not in control.

Riding in an auto-rickshaw isn't the most comfortable form of transportation. There's no air conditioning, the road is really bumpy and difficult to navigate, and sometimes you end up riding with a bunch of different people.

It's much like following Jesus. He doesn't just lead us to really comfortable places where all our desires and preferences will be met. Instead, Christ asks us to lay these things down, because he is far greater than all of them combined. From my own experience, following Jesus can be pretty bumpy and can take you down unfinished roads and places that you would've never dreamed of going. During these times, you just hold on, try to learn as best as you can, and trust in his plan despite the hardship, defeat or sin.

We also have the joy of sharing this ride with people all around us. Sometimes we would rather have other people with us during certain seasons, but in South Asia I'm learning to embrace the people I'm surrounded by, because the Father has us together to learn from each other. Embracing the awkwardness is a lot easier and more rewarding than fighting or nitpicking the people around you. Embrace and learn.

Finally, I've learned that at the end of the day I don't get to negotiate, bargain or set a price for an auto-rickshaw. I can attempt to bargain and negotiate and lower the price until I think it's fair, but in the end, my rickshaw driver is getting the exact amount of money he sought to get from me.

In my mind and prayers, I tend to slide a negotiation to Jesus and convince him of why my way is more effective, comfortable or convenient for me. However, my sin already set the fixed price, and Jesus' blood paid it all for me. I'm so thankful for his love, kindness and generosity toward me. According to Romans 3:23, the price I had set was death, but Jesus paid that and gave me the free gift of life out of pure love. I just have to repent, believe and follow him.

When I think of his kindness toward me, I am more than willing to offer up my life to share his glory and name with everyone I can as a small gift. After all, "we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

My time in South Asia is so short and so small compared to the love and grace that Jesus freely gives, but so meaningful for everyone that I will share with. I am so thankful to ride on Jesus' auto-rickshaw and see where—and to whom—this adventure takes me.

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