

Heart for the Poor From another's perspective April 13 2010

Lately I have been posing a few questions to my friends on Facebook about their views on cycling and cyclists. There have been some great responses. To the question "What's your first thought when you get held up by a cyclist?" responses ranged from being distracted by lycra clad thighs to shooting the offending rider! As you can imagine, drivers have a very different perspective to cyclists. I had a good lesson in perspectives on Saturday after exploring mountain bike trails around the edge of the Manukau Harbour. On the way home I was forced off the road by a passing bus.

From my perspective that huge wall of steel pushing me into the gutter was pretty terrifying. The bus driver would have seen my predicament from a very different perspective. Someone once said life is like a woven tapestry, we see the underside, but God can see the whole picture from the top. In Isaiah 55:8-9 we read "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Sometimes we have to get out of our comfort zone to see another's perspective. Sue, one of my staff has just returned from visiting TEAR Fund projects in India. This was the first time she had been to the developing world. Meeting a group of women in a slum in Mumbai who had to queue each day for water not knowing if the truck was going to show up was a deeply moving experience. These women are trapped in a brutal, hot, crowded environment with out access to all the services we take for granted. Their only hope for a future was their involvement in the project we are supporting through a Christian organisation called Saahasee. They save a few rupees each week and eventually are able to apply for a business loan from the community savings fund. Sue's perspective on the poor has been forever changed by going into their homes and hearing their stories.

Now I haven't sat in a bus driver's seat and had to deal with avoiding other road users. I wonder how that bus driver might feel swapping her bus with a bike for a day. Until we step in someone else's shoes, it is hard to see the world through their eyes. I am grateful that I know Jesus understands my insignificant problems because while he didn't ride a bicycle, he did become a man and went through all the challenges and more we grapple with.

Prayer: Father God, you have created us equal in your eyes, yet in the world some have power and some don't. Give us the grace to pray for those in power that they might have compassion on the vulnerable. Give us the courage to confront injustice. Give us the desire to see things from the perspective of others in a way that reflects your love and glory.

Richard Barter