



Manila, Philippines

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I confess that I am by nature a complainer. Some days, life in Manila brings me ample opportunities to refine this art. Yesterday was one of those days. We are displaying some of our Village Handcrafters' products at the Philippine National Trade Fair for the next few days. I normally drive my motorcycle everywhere (which helps to restrict my opportunities to grumble about traffic). But yesterday I borrowed the Kia (this vehicle should not really be called a car) of a missionary who is out of the country right now so that I could bring a couple of our workers with me to help at the Fair. I read somewhere that Manila has the slowest average traffic speed of any city in the world. Yesterday I was helping to contribute to this statistic on my way to the trade fair.



The first 30 minutes of my commute were slow but bearable. The next 30 minutes were ridiculous. Every 2 seconds: clutch, brake, gas, clutch, brake, gas... moving ahead 6 feet then sitting for 10 seconds before another 6 feet of motion. I slowly made my way to one of the many bottle necks here where a four lane road abruptly becomes a two lane bridge. This particular "fly over" is higher than most and so the bridge has about 200 yards of incline before it levels off. I was about half way up this hill when it happened. I sort of flubbed up on the gas – clutch portion of my well practiced sequence at the same time the AC compressor cycled on and I stalled. In a normal car this would be no big deal but Kia makes life a bit more of an adventure. Almost immediately the multitudes behind me began honking their horns. This chorus in combination with the roar of diesel engines climbing the hill in the other lane made it difficult for me to hear what was happening when I turned the key. I opened my door a bit and tried again. Now all I could hear was the shouting of the driver behind me. People should know better than to drive behind Kias. I soon grasped that my turning the key was accomplishing about as much as the driver behind me so I got out and opened the hood.

One thing good about Kia is that they seem easy to troubleshoot. The problem components are apparently engineered to smoke extensively when they fail. So I quickly saw that the battery and battery cables were at fault. The geniuses at Kia placed the battery right next to the hottest part of the motor, the exhaust manifold. This may be a great design for driving in Siberia but it does not work well in Manila traffic. The rubber insulated, positive battery cable is actually secured to the exhaust manifold. I guess they do this so that it does not accidentally get against something hot, like the exhaust manifold.

At this particular spot along the bridge there were two city workers painting the soot covered cement curb with white paint using one inch brushes. When I opened my door, one of these smiling, sun beaten workers suggested that they could push me up the hill to try to "push-start" the Kia. Apparently he was much stronger physically than

mentally. But his suggestion did wake me up to the fact that I would be able to “pop the clutch” in reverse if I could just get the cars behind me to give me some room. I asked one of the curb painters if he could help me direct traffic out of the way. It seemed everyone was cooperating well and a lane began to open up. Then I noticed that a huge tow truck, which the city stations at this particular bridge to watch for Kia drivers, had fought his way through four lanes of angry drivers. He was now in my lane and ignoring the directives of my curb painter friend, closing fast on the back of the Kia. It was now or never. So I let the vehicle roll backward and build up speed as I prepared to pop the clutch...

As I was doing this I turned back to see how much space I had left between me and my approaching rescuer. That's when I saw the two Village Handcrafters' employees that were with me in the car. Their eyes were closed and their heads bowed. I suppose they could have been scared to death and bracing for impact but it appeared that they were praying. “O yeah, I forgot about that,” I thought as I released the clutch.

Now you would think that a missionary driving a Kia in a third world metropolis would be the most likely person on the planet to seek God's help but I often just do things and complain about what results. I forget to pray, the key element in really accomplishing anything.

After the initial jerk (not me, the motor's resistance to the car's drive train turning it), the Kia roared to life. I braked quickly and over revved as I headed back up the over pass. I heard my companions uttering thanks to Jesus for his help. It suddenly dawned on me that this event was not an accident, it was a set up. God had caused different factors to fall in place to put me behind the wheel of this Kia on this day, at this particular place. He'd dressed a couple of heavenly messengers as curb painters and positioned them at the very place I would stall to interact with me and miraculously direct a lane of bumper to bumper, irritated drivers out of my path. And then He'd again used those I'm supposed to be ministering to, to minister to me. He answered their prayers and got us going in the right direction again.

Pray with me that God will continue to re-start me and head in the direction He desires for me, molding this complainer into a pray-er who recognizes his dependency on the sovereign God of the Universe.

Thanks you for praying for us,
Mike



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