



*“When driving, assume you are the only sane person on the road – imagine every other driver and pedestrian are out of their minds.”* This was the advice given to me by the highest ecclesiastical authority Methodism has in these parts. While it may seem exaggerated, it has helped me to avoid a number of accidents. The roads are jam packed. Indeed, just going to the capital can take four hours (and its only about 50 miles). In addition to the plethora of trucks coming from Mombasa, there are thousands of motorcycle taxis. Though I used to complain about these bikes (Okadas) in Cameroon it feels like there are far more of them (known as Boda Bodas) here.

While I try to assume that I’m the only sane person (don’t laugh) it is still very easy to hit something. As you move along, motorbikes surround you, weaving in and out on both your left and your right.

To add to the pressure, oncoming traffic can be on the wrong side of the road as people overtake lorries. Vehicles can also swerve into the wrong lane when trying to avoid potholes (we are abundantly blessed with many of these).

Driving at night is not for the faint-hearted. If there are cat’s eyes (and I haven’t seen any) then they have lost their sparkle. Many vehicles have no headlights. Many have no breaks. Even more hazardous is that when there are no pavements pedestrians are everywhere. I have really learned to pray here (indeed, I have a theory that religious adherence is higher in countries with dangerous roads). You cannot safely navigate a roundabout (I am still unsure if it’s the people on the roundabout who have right of way or those entering- both happen here) without making some sort of religious utterance. Indeed, I believe roundabouts are an argument for the existence of God (surely no one would be alive if the contrary were true).

I have to confess, however, that I have already had an accident. One morning, we set off at 5 am in a vain attempt to shorten the four hour journey to the capital and, as I tried to overtake a minibus, I scraped another vehicle on my right. If I hadn’t been wearing my dog collar I am sure I would have a very different story to tell. However, as the very angry man exited his vehicle, and approached my car, he seemed to tangibly calm down when he realised I was a pastor. I too kept my cool and the situation ended amicably.

Whatever my complaints above (it has been a hard week) we always thank God for protection. God has been so good to us and none of us have had even a scratch. This is really something. Indeed, before Christmas I had a very close encounter with a brick. Grace had gone in the market (with all the money) and a man came up to the car window asking for some help. I usually have something ready but I genuinely had nothing on me. I tried to explain (with my poor language skills) that my wife had taken all the money but that I believed (with all my heart) that she would come back in a minute and we’d help him.

The man did not believe me. He started shouting "*Mzungu! You must have money!*" and I knew it would be impossible for me to convince him to the contrary (Hollywood, tourist dollars, overseas charities and centuries of colonialism could not be undone) with my feeble "*I really don't have any money.*" The louder he shouted the more quickly I wound up my window (thinking that this would somehow protect me). It was then that the man picked up a brick. I don't think I have ever turned the ignition so quickly. I reversed backwards, as Grace exited the market, and we sped off (I don't drink but I thought about it that night).

I don't blame the man. Our (wzungu) actions in Africa have led to this kind of reaction. We (wzungu) are the authors of an insidious deception. We masquerade as the saviours of the world, pretending we have all the answers and can solve everybody's problems. We cannot (in fact, we have caused the majority of them). Let us pray that this wzungu saviour paradigm will well and truly shift - that we will lose our superiority complex and sit at the feet of our partners and really listen to them. We will have much to gain if we do.

Please pray for us. That we would continue to be safe on the roads, in the market and indeed everywhere else.

Song here <https://youtu.be/ui9Vfn4U3YE?feature=shared>