

RIDING TO BUILD FUTURES IN SOUTH ASIA

Learn how one man rides thousands of miles on his bicycle to raise funds and awareness for children in South Asia. by DAVID ARGABRIGHT

Early in the morning on September 4, 2010, I sensed God speak to me as I read, “I looked for a man among them who would build up a wall and stand before me in the gap . . . but I found none” (Ezekiel 22:30).

This scripture penetrated my heart and confirmed my call to ride a bicycle across the U.S. to raise awareness of the needs of the children in South Asia. The funds raised are sent to Nazarene Compassionate Ministries (NCM)-South Asia to establish new Child Development Centers

Gripped through witnessing the extreme needs of children in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka while on Work and Witness teams, I felt God called me to make an extreme statement on their behalf. According to UNICEF, malnutrition, disease, and extreme poverty take the lives of approximately 3,000,000 children under the age of five each year in South Asia.

My brother, Glen, started this fundraising campaign for NCM-South Asia in 2008 by having the vision to run 150 miles on an elliptical exercise machine in two days. In 2009, I rode a bicycle 575 miles in the mountains of Virginia and North Carolina and called the effort Compassion 575. In 2010, the 819-mile bicycle route began on the Natchez Trace Parkway just outside Nashville and concluded with six Christian brothers riding with me the final 50 miles to the Living Word Church of the Nazarene in Houston.



► **DAY 1:** On March 12, 2011, supported by prayers of South Asia partners, family, and friends, I left from the Pacific Ocean in San Diego to ride across the southern tier of the country on a bicycle. After riding for 34 days, we finished the 3,022-mile trip at the Atlantic Ocean in St. Augustine Beach, Florida.

My wife, Sharon, supported me in the SAG (support and gear) vehicle. The challenges included flat tires, temperatures between 26 and 98 degrees Fahrenheit, and a total of 33 exhilarating dog chases. Josh Diepert of the Las Flores Church of the Nazarene in Carlsbad, California; Ira Brown, pastor of the Mesa, Arizona, Church of the Nazarene; and our son, Brad, each rode with me a day for encouragement. Scott and Jenni Rainey and Ted and Lisa Diehr of the Houston’s Living Word Church of the Nazarene joined Sharon and me while riding in the West Texas hill country.

► **DAY 6:** Faithfully, God answered the prayers of thousands of brothers and sisters in providing strength and protection. After climbing through the 1,300-foot-long narrow Queen Creek Tunnel, just past Superior, Arizona, I was overjoyed to see Sharon at the overlook just outside the tunnel. I asked her to hold my bicycle. I needed to walk and release my emotions. I was nearly in tears after the terrifying tunnel ride, sandwiched between a concrete barrier and heavy traffic.

David rides on the Texas Mountain Trail (Route 118) towards Fort Davis, Texas.



While I was on my walk, a woman came to Sharon and said, "I need to apologize. I did not see your husband in the darkness of the tunnel and I almost hit him with my car."

► **DAY 7:** After riding 101 miles, near the border of New Mexico, darkness caught me before completing the climb to the 6,295-foot summit. Sharon, ever cautious, while shining her headlights on the road said, "David! Get in the truck. The mountain will be here tomorrow." I climbed off the bicycle and placed it in the rack behind our vehicle. Sharon prayed, thanking God for the day's ride.

As we climbed into the Tahoe, a large mountain lion crossed just in front of us. A mile down the road while I was writing the day's blog, Sharon saw a large black bear by the side of the road. God was indeed protecting us as people prayed.

► **DAY 9:** Climbing 15.6 miles to 8,228 feet up Emory Pass in New Mexico took me beyond the limits of my endurance.

I will never forget God giving me a burst of energy as I called to Him for help. It seemed as though He shoved me up the steepest part of the climb at the exact moment John 3:16 was playing on my iPod. It was a wonderful "God moment" that I shall never forget.

► **DAY 23:** Riding towards Villa Platte, Louisiana, I had a flat tire 62 miles into the 100-mile ride. As I finished changing the tire, we were passed by three trucks pulling double trailers overloaded with timber. I felt God protected us by allowing the flat tire in His timing and removing us from harm's way.

We enjoyed praying for bike riders and providing water and nutrition during the hot days along the journey. One windy day in West Texas, Sharon cleaned and patched a female rider's bloody leg. The rider had cut herself on her bike's sprocket. God provided a large bandage, one Sharon did not remember packing in her first-aid kit. This felt like another wonderful miracle.

► **DAY 34:** Sharon and I were escorted the last 34 miles of the 2011 coast-to-coast ride into St. Augustine Beach, Florida, by Ron and Dianna Gilbert, and Glen, Jeannie, and Allison Argabright.

In the past four years, South Asia partners have invested over \$440,000 (USD) starting 26 new Child Development Centers in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. We thank God for the generous, sacrificial giving of so many. This journey was not about an adventure, but about the needs of children and communities needing to be reached by God's love.

Now, I am doing another ride beginning March 26 (Nashville to Key West, Florida, 2,012 miles in 2012.)

God sometimes calls us to make an extreme effort on behalf of an extreme need. He is faithful to provide and enable us as we trust in Him. **HT**

David Argabright is Work and Witness coordinator and raises funds for Child Development Centers for Nazarene Compassionate Ministries in South Asia.

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AT WORK