

McCRACKEN MEMO

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WEEKLY CONVERSATIONS...

I'm Sorry... Very Sorry

*"May I please come in and eat?
I'm very hungry and tired."*

I'm sorry...we have to serve in shifts because our space is so small. We're full right now. You'll have to wait about an hour. I'm very sorry.

"Do you have any more soup?"

I'm sorry...we've already served over 200 people and we have no more today. I'm very sorry.

"Can I come back for some food tomorrow?"

I'm sorry...We are currently only able to afford serving a meal two times a week. It will be another 5 days until we serve again. I'm very sorry.

"Do you know of anywhere I can find work? I've run out of money and really need a job."

I'm sorry...hundreds of people ask us this every week, and we honestly don't know of any possibilities right now. I'm very sorry.

"Is there somewhere I can just take a shower so that I don't feel like an animal?"

I'm sorry...We have a small sink in the restroom that doesn't work



A homeless Kurd and her baby

CONVERSATIONS (CONT'D)...

very well. You can use that. I'm very sorry.

"Do you have any men's shoes? You can see that mine are falling apart."

I'm sorry...all we seem to have right now are women's shoes, or these pairs that are much too big and in not much better condition than the ones you have on. I'm very sorry.

"Do you have a warm dry place to sleep? I don't ask for myself, but for my wife and children. I can keep sleeping in the park."

I'm sorry...we have been praying for years that God would give us such a place. Please pray with us that it will happen soon. I'm very sorry.

"Can we just sleep on your floor here tonight? Just for one night?"

CONVERSATIONS (CONT'D)...

I'm sorry...we don't own this place, and it was a condition of the rental agreement that we not allow people to sleep here. I'm very sorry.

"Why won't anyone help our people?"

I'm sorry...I really don't know. I'm very sorry.

"Greece is a Christian country, yes?"

I'm sorry...not every person or every country who says they are a Christian really is. I'm very sorry.

"You are a Christian, yes?"

I'm sorry...I know how this looks. I'm trying. I'm really trying. Please forgive me. Please forgive us, the Church, for not sharing the love of Jesus with you in more practical ways. I'm very sorry.

The preceding were real excerpts from real-life conversations that we have with refugees on (at least) a weekly basis. Of course, there are also **encouraging** conversations, but currently there are **over a thousand** (Muslim) Kurdish refugees living on the streets near our inadequate facility.

The Church here has been largely apathetic, if not downright antagonistic toward the plight of these desperate people and the

opportunities to share Jesus with them.

Thank YOU for caring. Thank you for helping us to offer our "loaves and fishes". We hope and pray that God will take them, bless them, break them, and multiply them, and use them for His glory.

Camp Ministry...

In addition the opportunities to serve refugees from our downtown facility, we have recently begun a soup kitchen ministry, English classes, and Kids Clubs at a tent-camp, north of Athens, for Kurdish refugees. *Doctors of the World* is the (secular) non-profit organization that sponsors this camp for 300 refugees (all families), and we are thankful for the way God is allowing our organizations to work together.

With winter upon us, the primitive conditions at this camp are being worsened due to the cold, rain, and snow. Please pray for us as we try to share the warmth of God's love through word and deed with these open and needy people.

Zef's "Graduation"...

We have written many times about Gregor Menga, our Albanian brother who came to Jesus in Athens and went back to Albania to plant a church in his home city. Gregor and his entire family (who were led to Jesus by him) are all very dear to us. His father, Zef, was recently hit by a motorcycle while he was riding a bicycle. After 5 days in a coma, he went to be with Jesus. The following are excerpts from a letter that Gregor e-mailed to us after Zef died...

My dear friends,

My father passed away to be with the Lord, in glory, on Tuesday 3.30 AM in the military hospital of Tirana.

Today we had the funeral in Shkoder.

These days have been very difficult for me and my mother who lived on concrete pavement outside the intensive care unit the last 6 days. The last days with the problems in Tirana we went through so much. The doctors and nurses did not come to work because there where people shooting in the streets of Tirana. Every 3-4 minutes emergencies of gunfire-wounded people arrived and the floors where covered with people waiting for surgery, and with blood. You did not have to be a nurse to help carry the people and do other things.

The night when my father gave up his spirit, there was no doctor in the intensive care unit. Only nurses. He had been for 6 days in a coma, under oxygen, with a contusion of brains and crushed lungs. In Albania you are not allowed to go inside the intensive care room, and if you can make it is only for a minute. My mother wanted so much to serve him that night. The nurses were so harsh and offensive all the time. She managed to get in half hour before he died. Then came back and woke me up. We both managed to get inside around the bed and prayed our last prayer for him, but my stomach was empty. My heart was breaking for all my father had to go through. His appearance had changed much. His face was deformed from wounds and probably some broken bones of the face.

That was my last time I saw my father still breathing. At 3.30 AM there were no telephone lines working in that hospital and going out was not the thing to do since police forces where commanded to shoot at will, as they were taking the control of the capital city from the rebels. At about 4.30 AM we had managed to use a special military connection to make just two calls.

I'm grateful to God for His true promises of His family. We had so many friends that the next day risked their lives to be around us and help me and my mother find clothes for my dad's body, a casket and transport back to Shkoder on a day no vehicle wanted to go anywhere.

God has been using this for His Glory. We have been a witness for Jesus in the hospital and at the funeral; not that we tried, we just were and God used us a lot. It might be in Shkoder the first

funeral where neither a Catholic priest nor a Moslim one were to be, but that the Gospel could be shared to a multitude that I never could get to come to church. Around the tomb while the hope of salvation was being shared I could see that large crowd and think of John 11:24. I hope with the deep joy and hope we showed the people Jesus.

Certainly we suffer so much the separation and I'm going to miss my father a lot (I already do). Tonight there is a sense of loneliness. First night without him. And this wound will take time to heal. But I'm glad for my dad tonight. He is gazing the beauty of Jesus.

Thanks for being with me and my mom in prayer. We have felt it. God has been giving us all the grace we need in these difficult moments.

God bless
Gregor

Please continue to pray for Gregor, his mother Roza, his sister Esmerelda, and his sister Laura (who is here in Athens with her family).

I loved Zef Menga very much and I am grieving too (though not for him). He was a man of godly wisdom who emanated love and humility. He was a deeply loved and respected elder in the church Gregor pastors and his absence will have a profound impact on the fellowship. Please pray for the believers in the church as well.

If you would like to contact Gregor directly, his e-mail address is:
nej-shkoder@maf.org

PLEASE ALSO PRAY FOR:

- Our Christmas Outreach
- Funds for the A.R.C.
- Greek Christians to reach out to refugees

God bless you all and thank you for serving Him together with us! We love and appreciate you.

Financial Contributions: Write checks to International Teams, and specify for the McCrackens OR the Athens Refugee Center; Send to: International Teams PO Box 203 Prospect Heights, IL 60070