

Because of the Extreme Poverty, Much of the Time People Try To Exploit Us

Our Unification Church Missionary in Africa

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To make friends, we are trying to establish relationships whenever possible and edge little by little towards their thoughts on various things. There is no university or place where people gather, except the mosque.

Language is a big problem as well. Though most educated people speak French, we don't so well. Beyond that is a dialect of Arabic which we are trying to learn little by little, but there is little other way to learn except by trying to talk to someone. We know many people, and have guests drop by from time to time.

What is disappointing about that is that much of the time we are used. People come by and try to be friends so we will lend them money, or any number of other things. Alcohol is prohibited for natives so they think we may be a source of that as well. We have not made a practice of lending money. In one case we did just to see what would happen. A guy who was always very nice and would come over from time to time came over and said that he needed \$5 for dinner, because the Army was serving a kind of food that he can't eat because he has had stomach problems.

He swore over his mother's grave that he would be back in three days to pay it back. That was the last we saw of him until about four weeks later when he came panting up o the door asking us for \$20 for an emergency, a matter of life and death, etc. We just asked him why he didn't come back before now? He pleaded and begged, which is the worst part. He finally left (empty-handed) and we haven't seen him

since.

All the time there are people begging on the streets. It is part of the Moslem duty to give alms. I have seen some truly beautiful scenes of people giving to one another -- little children giving to old men in the street, so many things. They never fail to come up to me. It really hurts. I know that I could give them all I have, and they would be the same tomorrow as they are today, and I would be able to do them no good.

But the point that I have been leading to is the sheer human degradation. Have you ever been to a zoo and seen 20 monkeys scrambling for one peanut that someone happened to throw in -- that is the way it is. It's that scrambling that I hate. It is less than human. One-legged guys come up to me pleading and begging for just a penny; they think that because I am white, that I must have millions and here I go waltzing past them. How else can they feel? Then you see some lady throwing stale bread out of her window at a group of kids who scramble in the street for it in more confusion than the monkeys.

I was riding past a big warehouse where the Chinese keep grain and I saw a woman out in front scraping up the remains that were on the ground with her shoe and cradle it in her hand for the evening meal. That in itself is not so spectacular, but it was just the image that hit me as I looked on -- the degradation of the human spirit, the scavenging like dogs over a lone morsel. What kind of life is that?

Being here and seeing these things are leaving indelible impressions in my mind. I think back to the time when I was still in the States, when I could work freely and not have to confront the basic problems of survival, before pursuing the way of salvation for the people. What we have in America! What a life! We can never know, even if we live in it, what it means to live like this, truly live like this.

To have no childhood, but just scrounging. Yet we can get free scraps at a restaurant which would be a feast for some of these people. We can go to a big university, have all sorts of opportunities. What a blessing America has received and how little she realizes.

I am an American, or more generally, simply white. It is obvious that we have to show them the ideal. We have to expand our base here and in the U.S. in order to help these people learn how to live for themselves. We must give them what they need, not just throwing bread crumbs in the dirt, but something substantial that will last after the food is digested, and the thankyou's said. We have to give them the desire and the will to live, and live right; to stop scrambling, to want to provide for themselves instead of just acting dumb and letting the whites do it. There is much we have to learn, but if I was only to take these impressions with me when I left I know that it has and would continue to change my life.