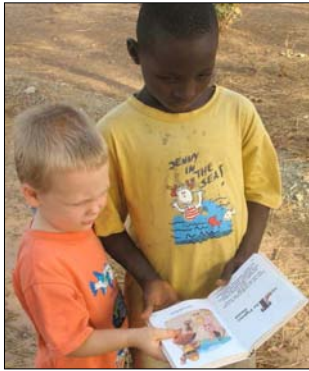


Letter from Africa

by Riley and Duncan Murdock

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Do you have a Bible? Do you have more than one? In different versions? Can you read your Bible, or can your parents read it to you? These may seem like silly questions to ask a Christian until you realize that not everyone can answer yes to them. Here where we live, very few people have Bibles, certainly no children do. There aren't any children's Bibles with pictures in them. Most of the Bibles people have are in French, which is no one's first language. Can you imagine having to learn another language, like Chinese or Greek, in order to read the Bible? Even if they had the Bible in their language, though, most people here wouldn't be able to read it anyway. Some of their languages aren't even written down yet – no one has figured out their alphabet or how to write their sounds out! There are ten to twelve different languages spoken in our area. Only one has the whole Bible written, 3 have the New Testament and a few more have several parts of the Bible, like the Gospel of Luke or the story of Joseph. Think of how hard it would be to grow in your walk with Christ if you didn't have the Bible to read, or any other books for that matter.

Some missionaries, including a lot of our friends here, come to the mission field specifically to work on translating Scripture and teaching people how to

read and write in their languages. Would you take a moment to pray for them? Pray that God would give them strength to persevere, that he would protect them, that he would give them wisdom to know how to do their work, and that he would provide committed Beninese to work alongside them. Their names are Carl &



Ursula Williams, Johannes & Sharon Merz, John & Carol Berthelette, Nora McNamara,

Kathy Quiett and Edie White. Pray also that the Beninese would see the importance of learning to read and write in their mother tongues so they can read the Bible when it is ready. Pray that they will pray for the translation work too.

What are some of the jobs people have where you live? Do you get to see people at work? Lately, I've watched men digging ditches with shovels, a leather worker making a holster, masons building houses with mud bricks and cement, a milliner grinding what to make flour, a seamstress making clothes and beekeepers pressing honey from a honey-



comb. Which of those have you ever seen? I bet if you had lived 100 years ago in the US, you could say you'd seen almost all of them. Life here, in some ways, is similar to

how it was in the US a long time ago, but in other ways they live on an even simpler level than that. People usually eat with their hands and few of them have outhouses – most use the nearby bushes. Hardly anyone has electricity and even fewer have running water – they use



kerosene lanterns and get water from a well (if they are lucky enough to have one in their village)

or walk a long way to get water from a muddy water hole. Almost everyone cooks over open fires, like constant camping!

At the same time, some people have cell phones now, use internet and watch satellite tv!

There is quite a mix between ancient ways of doing things and modern technology.



Part of what we are doing here is trying to help people understand how they can make simple changes that can really make their lives easier and healthier. Some examples of this are explaining to people the importance of washing their hands and keeping cuts clean, using outhouses, and filtering dirty drinking water. Pray that God will give us good ways to help people this way and that people would be willing to make the changes God wants them to make, for his glory.

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Questions:

1. Do most people here have Bibles? If so, are the Bibles in their own languages?
2. Can most people read and write in their own languages?
3. How do you think people grow in their walk with Christ if they can't read the Bible? How can you help them?
4. How is daily life for the Beninese different from your life? How is it the same?
5. What is one thing we are trying to do here?