

# Letter from Africa

by Riley & Duncan Murdock - Fall 2006

What do you know about baptism? I'm sure we all know about John the Baptist, and how he baptized people in the Jordan River, including Jesus. Some people believe in baptism by sprinkling water on the head, others believe in plunging the whole person into water. Where have you heard of people being baptized the second way? I've heard of baptisms taking place in special tanks, swimming pools, rivers, lakes, the ocean, and even bathtubs! For our churches here, it is now baptism time. Rainy season is over (if you prayed for rain for us, thanks!! we got plenty!), dry season will soon be here, and those who want to be baptized need to do so before the water holes dry up. Yes, here we use water holes – nice muddy ones, with creepy crawlies in them! Here are a few pictures of recent baptisms. Would you want to get into that water if it was the only water available for a baptism?! I guess it would depend on how serious you were about obeying Christ's instructions (Matthew 28:19). Please pray for these believers, that God will bless



them for their obedience in taking this public stand for him, and that he will help them to remain faithful and true witnesses for him for their whole lives.

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Be Beninese for a day! Try some of these things to get a feel for what it would be like to live in the culture here:

1. Greet everyone you meet with at least 3 sentences. At least 2 must be questions (ex. How do you feel? Did you sleep well?)
2. Eat a meal outside, on your front porch or yard. As you eat, call out to your friends and neighbors who walk by, and offer to share with them (here they say, "Do as I do!")
3. Cook only outdoors, using wood or charcoal. No using special liquids to start the fire.
4. Eat with your hands only, and use only your right hand.
5. When you buy something besides food, bargain for a few minutes to try to get the price down. (Rather than seen as rude, here this is another important part of relationships, and



in some places, people are insulted if you don't take the time to bargain!

6. Take off your shoes whenever you go into a house.
7. Try showering using only 2 or 3 gallons of water in a bucket. (Another time, when you use the shower as normal, plug the drain and see how much water you usually use.)
8. When you see someone working at a job, tell him or her, "Good work!"
9. Go see a friend, neighbor or relative unannounced to say hello and visit for a bit.
10. If someone comes to your house to visit, immediately offer some water and your best chair. If they were not expected, act very excited that they came to see you (even if you aren't). Forget any other plans you may have made for that time.
11. On the next major holiday, take some of your food and drink and go share it with your friends and neighbors at their houses.
12. When you interact with anyone on "business" (a doctor, librarian, store clerk, mechanic, bus driver, policeman, etc) before you ask for help or ask a question, see #1.

Which do you think would be the hardest one for you to do? Why? Look at numbers 1,2,5,8,9,10,11 and 12 again. What do you notice? How would you do things differently as an American? Where do you think people here place most value, on things/schedules/time or on people? What about in the US? Do you think one is more Christlike than the other? Do you think we can learn something from the Beninese culture in this area?

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While you are getting ready for cold weather, we are just beginning our hot season (though it won't get really hot till your spring). Now is the time for watermelon and guavas, we've taken our mosquito nets off our beds, and pretty soon we'll want to go swimming.



Guess what insect made this. Hint: it likes to eat wood.



One day's guava harvest



This HUGE leaf comes from a Teak tree.