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Mitendi Baptism



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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

I love baptisms! On a Saturday in June, I had the honor of witnessing the baptism of seven of our Mitendi girls! When we headed out of Kinshasa to the church early Saturday morning, I thought we were going to see only our girls baptized. I was wrong. In fact, they were part of a huge baptism celebration involving 8 churches. There were 46 baptismal candidates in total! To start the service, the head pastor gave a great message about what it means to be a follower of Christ. He explained the meaning of baptism and its place in the life of the believer. He also explained that baptism wasn't a spur of the moment decision for these candidates, but that each one had attended classes at their respective churches before deciding to make this public statement of faith.

The candidates were then called up one by one to give a short testimony. It was inspiring to hear them express their statements of faith. Each one said, "I am a follower of Jesus!" Many also added another proclamation like "I was lost in the dark, but Jesus brought me into the light" or "I was enslaved to the world, but now I'm free!" or "I was among the goats, and now I'm a sheep!" or "I was lost in the jungle, but Jesus put my feet upon the path!" At each statement the crowd cheered them on.

After giving their testimony, it was time to get in the long line to be baptized...

As the candidates lined up, the rest of us crowded around the baptistry to watch. The head pastor again asked each one, "Do you promise to follow Jesus all of your life?" With each affirmative answer, the pastor carefully dunked the person, making sure that every hair went under the water. I noticed that many of the young people seemed afraid and some even fought back. I realized that 90% of them had never been in water that deep. It made for some pretty dramatic emergences from the water.

We were pretty packed together there by the baptistry, but I loved getting to stand with the excited family members as they witnessed their loved ones being baptized. My favorite part, of course, was seeing the baptism of the final seven (our Mitendi girls). Getting to see their expressions of joy and being part of the celebration of one of the most important moments in their lives is something I won't soon forget. What a privilege! I wish you all could have been there with us!

Please pray for these young women as they seek live out their faith in very difficult circumstances. Five of the seven who were baptized are the girls who came to us from Inongo forest region, from the Batwa (Pygmy) tribe. Please pray that they will remain close to the Lord even after they return to their tribe, and for the impact they will have on their community through their faith and also the education and skills they are learning at Mitendi Women's Center. I am so grateful to all of you who make it possible for Mike and me to represent you in Christ's service here in the Congo! Thank you, also, for all your prayers and support for the ministry of the Mitendi Women's Center. You are helping change lives!
Much Love,

Jill