

# *Judea, Samaria... And Bagirmi Land*

Nathanael and Carrie Szobody and family, missionaries to Chad

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Many Fulbe refugees have fled Central African Republic because of war. A community has sprung up next to us and now several hundred Fulbe are our neighbors. They are exotic and fascinating people who appreciate color and beauty. This young man asked to have his picture taken with our daughter Adelynn's prize sunflower.

I (Carrie) opened the back door to our house. A thin young man with facial tattoos and a turban draped over his head and shoulder was standing by our spicket. Interesting? Yes, but I wasn't the one staring! I mumbled a self-conscious greeting, a word in his language that I'm still not sure whether it means "hello" or "thank you". Lifting my hand in a half-hearted wave, I continued purposefully, nonchalantly, as if he were there grinning widely to greet me every morning.

Ignoring his amusement, I told myself that he was likely there to get a drink from our outdoor faucet. How many times a day do I give or get asked for water? Often it goes like this: someone outside our kitchen door gets my attention with a sound, beckons me with a hand, and when I respond, he or she says, "Give me some water to drink." There is no "please". It isn't that people are rude; it is a fact of life that one needs water and asks for it from the person who has it. And if your language doesn't have the word "please" in it, you don't use it.

On a good day I give water joyfully. I go into the house, open the fridge (a new addition to our kitchen) and pull out a bottle of cold water which I mix in a bowl with lukewarm water because Chadians tell me that ice water hurts their teeth. Some days I get water graciously, but I grumble to myself that they have no idea that I just put my sick toddler down for a nap and I am on my way to check on my school-age children (who may be helping each other with their work, but more likely are cracking jokes or arguing). And then there are the days when I hand a bowl out of the door and point to the spicket, not even attempting to utter a word.

I am learning that sometimes loving my neighbor is as simple as stepping out of the door.

Our second term in Chad will end in May and we hope to spend a year in the US before returning. We continue to learn life here. I can say, on behalf of all of us, that we are more content and at home in the bush than ever before. We love our place – our home, our trees, and our neighbors!

Yours for the Kingdom,

*Nathanael & Carrie Szobody  
and family*

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