



Jason & Emily Atkins

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Happy New Year! by Emily

On January 1, 2008 Jason and I were out in one of the villages in Guinea-Bissau spending the holidays with about 25 Brazilian missionaries. The group of us set out early that morning and headed to a beautiful river where we spent the day swimming, hiking, and eating (monkey meat is best grilled over an open fire beside a peaceful river). Later that night Jason and I spent some time reflecting on how many ways God had blessed us in 2007.



The coolest tree by the river



*Yes, that's monkey meat.
 Got to start the New Year off right!*

This year started out a little differently: no bucket showers, plenty of electricity, and no one speaking Portuguese. So far we've been spending lots of time with family and friends enjoying many Christmas and New Year's festivities and just like last year we can't help but realize how much we were blessed by God in the past year. As we look ahead to 2009 we know that in many ways it's going to be a crazy and an unexpected ride, but we also know that we serve a powerful and faithful God and we can't wait to walk through the doors that He will open for us. We wish you and your family a Happy New Year filled with the blessings and opportunities that only God can bring!

Voices of Africa – Francisco “Sisco” João Mebede

What do you do at the YFC Youth Center?

Sisco: I am the director of the Informatica (Computer Systems) department, so I am responsible for all of the computer courses that are offered by the Youth Center and I also teach basic and intermediate computer classes.

Why do you like being a computer teacher?

Sisco: Teaching is the first job I learned to do, and I like teaching. Teaching computers helps me learn more about them so that someday I can become a computer Engineer.

Why do you think it's important for people in Guinea-Bissau to learn how to use computers?

Sisco: People in Guinea-Bissau need to know how to use the computer because in the whole world now work is done with computers. Right now if you want to get a good job in Bissau the first thing people will ask you is if you know how to use a computer. Then they will ask if you can speak English or French. I would like you to know that there is no better place to learn computers in Guinea-Bissau than the YFC Center, because all the other places do not teach you enough to know how to do things well on the computer.



*Jason's right hand man,
 Sisco, working on a lap top.*

Continued...

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What was life like in the village where you grew up? What is your ethnic group like?

Sisco: Well, I am Balanta by ethnic group. Life in my village was good when I was young, there was enough rain for my family to farm a lot of food. Now things have changed because of the lack of rain - it is difficult to find enough food for our big family. Most Balantas have large families because the men have many wives. In general, Balantas are good people. They are friendly and they do not treat strangers badly. In many ways they love guests more than members of their own families and they give them many things without making them pay. The bad part of their culture is that they often rob each other and other villages. A lot of Balantas are starting to stop this practice because they can see how it is bad.

How did you become a Christian?

Sisco: I became a Christian when I was a child. The sorcerers (witch doctors) in our village decided that I should be killed so my mom took me to another village, called Farim, to hide. The sorcerers in Farim did not want to kill me, so we were safe there. My mother met some people who were Christians and she and I both became Christians. She is still living in Farim today.



Sisco always loves a party

Support Raising by Jason

Many people have been asking us lately how our support raising is going so we want to give you a little update. Our support team is made up of two distinct roles. Our prayer team is critical to our ongoing success and we greatly appreciate everyone who spends time with God praying for our health, safety, success, and closeness with God. The second part is the financial support team. Our financial needs are broken into two halves, both of which must be fulfilled before we are able to return to Bissau.

The first part of the financial puzzle is one-time cash gifts that will be used to cover expenses such as training, plane tickets, equipment, etc. The total for that component is \$19,979, and we have been amazingly blessed by people's generosity in helping us toward that goal! The second component is the ongoing monthly support which will fund our ministry in West Africa and living expenses, \$4,200 per month. We are looking for people who have a heart for what God is doing in Africa who are interested in partnering with us by committing to give a small part of that each month.



As you can see from the picture above, lots of generosity has put us very close to the goal in the one-time gifts category. We have also been very blessed by everyone who has made a monthly commitment. To date, 35% of the \$4,200 that we need per month has been pledged. We will be in Colorado for training until February 6, and after that as soon as we have reached the goal we will be able to return to Bissau!!! We continue to pray that God will lead us to the people with a heart for reaching West Africa who will make up the rest of our monthly team. If you know anyone who would be interested in hearing what we're doing, we'd love to talk to them!

For the latest info about how our support raising is going go to our website – www.jasonandemilyatkins.com

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