



The Atkins Family

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Sharing a bowl of rice with a group of friends at a party in 2008



Thanksgiving trip to Senegal in 2009



Applying for our first baby's passport. Can you believe she's already on her second one?!

Ten Years *By Emily*
Twelve years ago I was the young new-lywed who flatly told Jason, "No way," when he asked if I would ever consider a three-month trip to work in Africa. Thankfully, over the next year I reconsid-ered. Two years later, in August 2006, we stepped off a plane and were greeted by a wave of heat and humidity welcom-ing us to our very first rainy season in Guinea-Bissau.

Ten years. Sometimes I just can't wrap my mind around all that God has done in the past decade. This job, this life, this place, these kids. When I think back on the past ten years I think first about the crazy times - the coups, Ebola, malaria, our babies, language learning, transi-tions, moves - then one feeling arcs like a rainbow over the whole thing. Love. We have been so loved. I mean really, honestly, wholeheartedly loved.

People here have welcomed us, taught us, been patient with us, learned from us, worked with us, invited us to join in their lives, and loved us.

People in the US have listened to us,

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prayed for us, visited us, sacrificed financially to support us, invited us to join in their lives, and loved us.

We came here because the love of Christ drew us to this place and this ministry, and we have stayed here because that same love supports each day through the hands of His people. Thank you for all of things you’ve done together with us for the past ten years.

People always ask us how long we’re going to stay here. We don’t know. There are so many things we’d love to do, projects we’d love to see completed, and we are in very fruitful years of ministry: we speak the language, we understand the culture, our home and the shop are set up and functioning. Physically living here is hard, the work moves slowly, the country is unstable, homeschooling is a huge responsibility, and being so far from our family and friends is a daily struggle. But, if we were making the decision just based on how we feel, we would have come home long ago! Our calling here is the same as your calling at home: daily faithfulness to grow closer to God and follow the opportunities He opens up.

So this month we looking back at some pictures of our journey, celebrating how God has kept us here, and and praying that He will continue to lead us in the years to come.

Doing the Hard Things *By Jason*
I have taken on some unanticipated, new responsibilities at the school since arriving in March. The school made a new hire in January for a brand new position. The responsibility of the Director of International Development will be to live in Guinea-Bissau full-time and work with the Guinean school leadership to improve things around the school, mostly relating to management/accounting systems and teacher/program development. The new American hire decided shortly after arriving that it wasn’t a good fit, and returned to the U.S.

I offered to do parts of the job part-time until a proper replacement could be found. The job involves a lot of meetings, which often seem like they’re causing minimal change. Despite my Business degree, these kind of meetings aren’t my favorite, especially while my shop sits idle behind a list of unfinished projects a mile long. One thing we learned through our experience working with the leadership of Youth For Christ Guinea-Bissau though, is the importance of this kind of gradual, rub-off style teaching. It is vital to the long-term shaping, character building, and guiding of an organization.

With so much other work piling up, it’s sometimes discouraging to pull away to have budget meetings, but we know how important this training is to the continued success of the school, working toward one day being able to continue functioning excellently on its own, without us. WAVS has found a successor to take over this job, so my role is just to keep the ball moving gradually forward until Jenna arrives in late October. We look forward to welcoming her and handing the reins over to someone who has the ability to dedicate her full-time attention to this important role!

Jason + Emily



Our current big project, the drinking water filter factory.



Handwashing some laundry before we got our washing machine



Who could forget installing 60 solar panels two stories up in the air at the Youth Center in Bissau?



Building Jason’s first machine shop