



The Atkins Family

Jason, Emily, Savannah,
Nathaniel, and Miriam

Serving in Guinea-Bissau with



June 2019

Our tropical-blooded
kids had their hoodies
ready to land in Michigan
on June 11th!

Loss by Jason

I'm impressed by the resilience with which God has gifted my kids. After flying back to the U.S. with them via a four day stop at friends' house in Germany, I'm sitting in a comfortable chair in Michigan, not sweating, and mentally unpacking the last few weeks. Though there have been many fun moments and the kids did great on the trip, the weeks have been full of deep loss.

The kids and I flew out of Bissau on June 6th, leaving Emily and our housemate and coworker Jenna in the house for another month, to wrap up work and put on a training for the staff of the vocational school in the end of June. The kids and I came back to the U.S. to get a few things prepared and then settled for a little while before we hit the road visiting family, friends, and churches. The kids said goodbye to Emily for almost a month. Though they know she's staying to do important work, they still miss her a lot in the meantime, obviously.

In Canchungo, it's been a great blessing that the kids have learned to speak Creole and now have neighborhood friends that they play with every afternoon. Those friendships also mean another thing to miss while we're away, and another goodbye right before leaving.



Just in case you were wondering, yes, Nathaniel and Miriam can both fit in the overhead compartment.

Our kids have grown up spending most of their time in Guinea-Bissau. While Emily and I are coming back to "normal" in America, they are leaving it. They're saying goodbye to "normal" ways of playing with friends, ways of interacting with grownups, and knowing what to expect.

Jenna, who has been an important part of our house and daily lives for three years now, has made the tough decision not to continue her role with WAVS. Her time in Guinea-Bissau will end in early July, so the kids also said goodbye to an "aunt" who has been in the household as long as Nathaniel and Miriam can remember. (Continued on the back...)



Saying goodbye to mommy for a month was hardest for Miriam.



Stretching out and getting some sleep on an uncrowded, overnight flight.

Loss (cont'd) by Jason



Jenna with our family on the canoe to an island beach camping weekend a few months ago.

Then, to cap "everything is changing and there are too many good-byes" week, the day after we flew out, Emily called to say that our dog had died. She was 10, so the kids have never known a time without Sydney. She was a fiercely loyal guard dog and amazingly patient with our babies and toddlers. She had been sick for several weeks, and we did the best we could for her, but she wasn't strong enough to win the fight. Another goodbye. Another loss.

Though I'd like Emily and I to take credit for helping prepare the kids mentally for the changes that were coming, or having enough snacks packed for the trip, or finding fun things to do along the (sometimes stressful) way—none of those things can claim full credit for the fact that after all they've been through in the last few weeks, they're sitting in their grandparents' living room, playing with toys and happy. God gives us grace for the hard things He puts in front of us, and I'm grateful for that.

Teacher Training by Emily

I always think that the most impactful teacher trainings start with good theory, but then move beyond that to putting the theory into practice. This past week I led three days of fun and productive training with the English, French, IT and welding teachers at the vocational school. After a session giving them several different strategies to maximize student involvement in their classrooms, I taught two different example lessons (one with English greetings, and another where they learned to build a ball out of magnetic building toys). After each lesson the teachers had time to critique my teaching in light of the theory we had talked about earlier. Everyone had fun with the lessons, and seeing the principles we had been talking about applied in an actual classroom made the theory much more practical.



Leading a spiritual development session on including Biblical principles in our classes.



The vocational school staff.



Leading a session on organizing multiple classes.



Cirilo and Marfan (welding and French teachers) working together to build a sphere out of magformers during a teaching demonstration.



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