



The Atkins Family

Jason, Emily, Savannah,
Nathaniel, and Miriam

Serving in Guinea-Bissau,
West Africa

Sept / Oct 2023

Guinea-Bissau celebrated
50 years of indendence in
September!

Sunday School *by Emily*

My sermon prep last week took me to the book of Acts where I was reminded that the first thing the disciples did when the Holy Spirit filled them at Pentecost was to stand up and speak out loud the words that the Spirit filled them with. They testified to who Jesus is, what His death and resurrection accomplished, and the life He is calling each of us to. Hearing their words, 3000 people stepped out of the very crowd that had demanded Jesus' crucifixion not two months before and accepted Him as their Lord and Savior. Amazing!

Years ago, when I started preaching regularly, I decided that I would say yes to every opportunity to teach God's word that I possibly could. Even in the middle of busy seasons, even when I was feeling spiritually empty, I wanted to say yes—trusting that God would have something to say, even when I didn't. Over the years I have been amazed at the ways that the Spirit has filled me and given me a message to go along with every "yes" I have said. Several times, when I was weeding in my garden on a Saturday morning, a sermon idea came to me with power. Each time I started thinking about the message and praying over it right there, and without fail the next day my pastor asked me if there was any way that I could preach the next Sunday.



About a month and half ago I started my newest teaching venture. Once or twice a month I teach our kids Sunday School class. The kids in the class are 2 to 12 years old, and we have anywhere from 30 to 50 of them crammed into school desks in a stuffy classroom. Most of them come from non-Christian families in the neighborhood. They walk to Sunday School, spend that hour with us, and then walk back home as the adults go in to start church. It's a ton of work to keep a group of kids that diverse interested and engaged with the lesson, but it's a joy and a privilege for me to see them remembering the lessons from last week and excited to dig deeper into the stories of the Bible.

Time For Floors! *by Jason*

As we arrive at the end of the rainy season, I feel an equal combination of excitement and exhaustion. This rainy season has been a paradox. On one hand, we have been able to accomplish a lot, facilitated by hard work, planning, and the tractor's ability to move things around even when the ground is too muddy for wheelbarrows. On the other (cont'd)

Time For Floors! (cont'd) *by Jason*

(...) hand, it has been a great deal of effort to make the gains we've made, during a time of the year where traditionally things have slowed down a little. I'm grateful for what's been accomplished and excited about the next steps we're now ready for. I'm also ready for a break.

The good news is that we are now completely done with the foundations of both our house and the whole workshop. The house is almost completely filled in and ready for compaction, gravel, vapor barrier, rebar mat, and then (finally) its concrete floor! The workshop is divided into three main sections, and the first of them is filled and ready for us to move toward pouring that section of its floor. Both of these foundation/fill processes have been significant efforts that began too long ago, and I'm excited to be nearing the phase where the floor will go down and walls finally get to start rising out of the ground.

We had the ambitious hope that before returning to the U.S. in the fall of 2024 we would be done enough with both the house and the workshop so that we could move into them before flying home. It's becoming apparent that this hope was more than we're going to be able to accomplish during this trip, which is disappointing, but not the end of the world. We've come up with an alternative plan that would have us build, roof, and secure about half of the house and a quarter of the shop, and move into those spaces before furlough so that when we return in late 2024 we'll be able to continue work finishing those buildings.

We appreciate all of your support as we continue this building phase. We are excited for what is being built and the ways it will be used long-term to spread the work of the gospel in Guinea-Bissau.

In the foreground, the first section of the slab pour in the shop will be this small room whose incline will rise from the level of the storage shipping container to the floor of the rest of the shop so that pallet jacks can move equipment and supplies between the two. Further away, the 20' x 50' room which will become the machine shop is filled and ready to be leveled, compacted, and poured.



Our house will include a single-room basement. The impetus for the basement was the giant underground termite mound that was in the ground here before we arrived, which had riddled it with holes and weakness. Once it was dug out, we decided to take advantage of the hole and make a basement room, hoping it will be nice and cool on hot days! Because we can't use wood for structural members (due to the termites) the basement's ceiling will be a poured-in-place concrete floor using a technique that's common here called block and beam construction. Our mason friend from our first days in Bissau, Nilton, came out to give us a crash course in how this kind of construction is done! Great to have the input of an expert!

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