



# The Atkins Family

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Nathaniel, and Miriam

Serving in Guinea-Bissau with



February 2019

Working through a few  
of the harder parts of life  
and ministry in G-B.

## Djitu Ten *by Jason*

A pair of welders have broken recently in my shop, and while working on them I was reminded again how important it is to have enough equipment and knowledge (or at least ability to use Google!) to be able to fix things as problems arise when you're in Guinea-Bissau. The first was the result of an electrical problem, and isn't economical to repair, but the second was a mechanical problem caused partially by age and mostly by the school's welding department operating in a temporary location, a rented house across the street from the school, which is filthy with grit blown into everything from the dirt road right in front of it. If we were in the States, for \$78 Amazon would've had a replacement part to us the next day—but that isn't the world we operate in. Fortunately, I had a piece of brass here that was part of a 2-ton steel/brass/aluminum stock auction lot I bought in Michigan a few years ago, which arrived here late last year, which was just the right size to make a new one. I also had the right threading die in a

bin from another auction, bought not knowing exactly when I'd need it, but wanting to have the bases covered. It's just a simple part, but I'm pretty happy with the result!

It isn't just about the welder. We have an older one in the corner as a spare which we could've gotten by on until a few months from now when the next visitor could've brought us a replacement part. A more important element of the situation is being able, in a small way, to begin walking back the idea that is deeply ingrained in the culture here: "djitu ka ten." Literally it means "we don't have the knack", but it's a byline for the fatalistic idea that, when you really get down to it, nothing is going to last, and there isn't much we can do about it. There is historical context for this mindset (because honestly, for the last 40 years, not much has worked right or lasted in Guinea-Bissau).

We're not trying to train foolish optimists, but there is a healthy, honest balance somewhere in the middle that we'd like to help get people used to. And being able to make a replacement part in 30 minutes and have the welder working again the same morning is a helpful counter-example to the many cases the students and teachers have seen here in Guinea-



*Putting the machine back together. It works like new now!*

## Djitu Ten (cont'd) *by Jason*

... Bissau where something breaks, and then sits unrepaired and deteriorating for years because of lack of a replacement part or the skill to fix it. Often Guineans are ingenious in repairing things in situations we'd never bother to try, but "djitu ka ten" is always waiting in the background, ready to pounce.

## 7 Days *by Emily*

Every week here is unique, and while I love to share about the weeks where we make big strides on projects, or get caught up in a swirl of wedding festivities, or have a surprise women's conference; I don't often talk about the weeks where life here is heartbreaking. This past week was one of those weeks, but even in the middle of it, God was at work.

One week ago today (Tuesday) my women's group from church went to the hospital to pray over two sick women. One, Ivania, the sister of a dear friend, was 8 months pregnant when her baby died. She had been in the hospital for 2 days receiving injections to start and increase labor, but though she was in pain, she hadn't had the baby yet. The second woman, Lurdis, had been severely ill for 7 years, and after spending all of her money and so much time at one witch doctor after another, she decided about a month ago to leave that all behind and become a Christian. Our church had just helped her get a blood transfusion and some testing, but she was exhausted and suffering.

I continued to pray for both women and Ivania did deliver the stillborn child on Wednesday. Then on Thursday a teenager came running to my door to tell me that my very pregnant neighbor, Louisa, had been found unconscious. They had brought her around somewhat, but she wasn't able to speak or remain upright. I ran up the path to her house while Jason drove around with our truck. Along with the help of several other neighbors we got her into the truck and Jason drove her to the hospital. As I walked with a neighbor back down from Louisa's house my neighbor started to scream and I realized there was someone in the river in our backyard. When I ran to check I found the body of my next-door neighbor, Bebe, who has a seizure disorder and had apparently had a seizure near the water, fallen in, and drowned. We pulled her out and did what we could, but it was too late. We sat with the mourners and cried over her body as the family gathered, and then Jason, along with a large group of family and friends, took her body back to her village for burial while I left the kids with Jenna and went to the hospital to sit with Louisa.

I continued to visit Louisa in the hospital everyday (she had passed out from extreme high blood pressure which they were treating with rest and IV hydration) and on Saturday two women from my church came with me. I have known Louisa for years and have shared the gospel with her in many ways countless times, and she always just laughs kindly and doesn't say much. But on Saturday she said she has been thinking a lot about Jesus and said she was ready to give her life to Him! We joyfully prayed with her, shared with her about what walking with Christ looks like, and then left and visited Lurdis, who had gone from bad to worse.

On Sunday morning at the end of the service a young woman gave her life to the Lord! As she was walking back to her seat another young woman, Olga, had a violent seizure and I joined the other women of our church who held her and prayed over her as she shook and then cared for her as she recovered.

Yesterday (Monday) Lurdis died and Jason, along with a large group from our church, transported her body back to her village for burial. We were praying for her healing so that her testimony could witness to her family about the power of God, and it was hard to say goodbye, but we are grateful she had given her life to God before the end.

Seven days. You never know what seven days will bring, but I have cried buckets of tears of heartbreak and joy over the past seven days. It's hard to live in a place where the treatment for so many medical conditions simply doesn't exist. To watch my friends and neighbors suffer and not be able to fix it - that part is not unique to Guinea-Bissau however, I know that many of you have felt that same frustration this past week. Through it all God is faithful. He has heard every prayer and seen every tear. Last night when I went back to the hospital in the evening to pray with Louisa I asked her how things have been since she prayed to receive Christ on Saturday. A slow smile spread across her face as she shared about feeling free. My prayer is that that same peace would guard the hearts and minds of person after person all across the country of Guinea-Bissau as lives are changed one by one by the power of the gospel.



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