

Alumni Spotlight: Jesse Johnson (MACT '05)



Current title: Missionary working in Christian Education and Church Leadership development.

Family: wife Joy and three boys

Favorite professor: Dr. Scott Hafemann.

Favorite class: Dynamics of Spiritual Life with Dr. Gwenfair Walters Adams

Favorite memory: The in-class and after class discussions (as we wrestled with the ideas presented).

Where are you currently serving as a missionary and what is your work there?

Burundi, East Africa. I began teaching at the Timothy Bible School for church leaders when we first arrived in Burundi in 2006 and started a Film Evangelism team that takes the gospel out to rural areas. Then my wife and I founded a K-12 Christian School (Discovery School) in 2008 with our Burundian church partners. Discovery School's Vision is "Rooted in Christ, Ready for Tomorrow." I still teach at the Timothy Bible School, but as Discovery School has grown to have more than 1,250 students and over 100 Burundian staff, I have devoted more and more time to it. My wife, Joy, is the Academic Dean and I am in charge of the Vision and Mission Support office.



Have you always been a missionary, or did you serve in other positions before becoming a missionary?

I started my training at GCTS already planning to go to Burundi as a missionary, and GCTS was part of the preparation. But the horizons of what God would open up for our family to be

involved in in Burundi were expanded by my time at GCTS.

How has God woven together your time at Gordon-Conwell with other life events to lead you to where you are now?

When I got to Burundi, the Bible School had no organized curriculum and was only teaching the courses the local teachers felt capable of teaching. My first responsibility was to organize the courses into a curriculum and develop courses to fill the gaps, all in a way that would be workable in the context and would translate cross-culturally. I could not have managed without what I learned at Gordon-Conwell. From the Biblical Studies courses to the Christian Thought courses; from Urban Ministry to Missions (contextualization) to church history, all these courses helped prepare me.

What do you love about your work? What are some of the hard things about life as a missionary in your context?

I love working with the local leadership to use the tiny amount of resources available to make a big impact (like converting a chicken house into our first Bible School classroom). At the same time, one of the hardest things is the constant need for more resources. Burundi consistently ranks as one of the 5 poorest countries in the world, and the needs are enormous. Another thing I love is seeing peoples' worldview change as they understand the Word of God more deeply and apply it to their lives—whether those people are church elders attending the Bible School or children at Discovery School. Another difficult thing is that the level of education available for our own boys isn't as good as needed to get into a good college in the U.S. (even Discovery School has to spend too much time teaching English as a second language) and so we have to choose between online school with few friends and no extracurriculars or boarding school in another country. Our oldest is off to boarding school this month for his sophomore year of high school.

How has your Gordon-Conwell education served you in your past and current work? Or what has been Gordon-Conwell's biggest impact/influence?

See the answer to number three. Gordon-Conwell's biggest impact has been on my role as a Bible School teacher and a leader who helped to select courses to be taught at the Bible School.

What piece of advice would you give to alumni who are considering the mission field?

Go with a humble heart and a learning posture. Have plenty of humor and display genuine love.

Links:

[Watch the latest update video](#) from Discovery School

Learn more about [Discovery School](#)