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B.J. AND RACHEL WHITAKER Serving Christ in Spain

QUICK FACTS:

Mission Organization
European Christian Mission
International



Country of Ministry
Spain

Birthplace
Missouri (B.J.)
Spain (Rachel)

Missionaries Since
2007

Education
B.J.: B.A. in Bible & Theology
(Asbury College);
M.Div (Evangelical Theological
Seminary)
Rachel: B.A. in Social Work
(Asbury College);
MSW (Rutgers University)

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Spain is in Western Europe and has a population of about 45 million with only 300,000 Christian believers.

THE STORY:

B.J. was born on May 17, 1980 and grew up in the tiny town of Buffalo, Illinois. Although he recalls early memories of attending Sunday School, his family members were not Christians, so the major influence in his life was non-Christian. However, at the age of 12, B.J. was invited by a friend to his church and youth group, and within three weeks B.J. had given his life to Christ. Almost immediately he sensed a call to serve in fulltime ministry, but over the next few years, this call was neglected. When he was 16, though, B.J. once again sensed God calling him to preach, and this time he fully committed himself to God and His call on his life. Although he had met missionaries from around the world, B.J. thought that this call to minister and preach the Gospel would likely mean serving as a pastor somewhere in the United States. So he enrolled at Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky in 1998 in order to prepare for this life of ministry, and this is where the plot thickens! His freshman year he met a young lady by the name of Rachel Anderson, and his view of the God, the world, and God's plans for him began to grow.



Rachel was born to E.C. missionaries Ron and Brenda Anderson on June 24, 1980 in Córdoba, Spain. At the young age of five, Rachel gave her heart to Jesus and reconfirmed this in the years to come. She deeply treasures her MK heritage, having been born and raised in Spain and being able to see the deep spiritual needs of Spaniards firsthand. She recalls memories of her Catholic friends going through the motions of confirmation in order to have a big confirmation party, as well as entering people's homes and seeing candles lit as prayers to various saints. As a result of her experience, she felt the desire even as a child to live in Spain and reach Spaniards with the good news of Jesus Christ.

At the age of 18, however, she left Spain to receive an American education at Asbury College, where she met a country boy by the name of B.J. Whitaker. We started dating our sophomore year, and as our relationship deepened, so did our sense that God was calling us to serve Him together. Through our experience on mission trips, we began to feel God leading us to serve Him in a cross-cultural setting, though we were not at first certain where this might land us. After graduating in May 2002, we were married on June 15, 2002, and moved to New Jersey where we served in youth ministry for two years, before moving to Myerstown, PA for B.J. to study at seminary and to serve as the youth pastor of Trinity E.C. Church in Mt. Joy, PA, while Rachel began work as a social worker. Throughout these first couple years of marriage we sensed stirrings of God calling us to serve Him in Spain, and while on vacation there in August 2005 we felt certain confirmation of this calling.

Having completed seminary in May 2008, we were commissioned as official E.C. and ECMI missionaries November 2, 2008, and we are very excited at the door that God is opening for us to work in Spain. We will work with European Christian Mission International, and after spending 2009 in the city of Córdoba for language and culture acquisition, we will focus on church planting in one of three areas: Madrid (the national capital); Córdoba (in the southern region of Andalucía); or Castellón (on the eastern coast). Rachel anticipates using her gifts and skills in counseling to minister to people and lead them into a healing relationship with Christ, while B.J. hopes to use his pastoral gifts in preaching, teaching, and discipleship as a part of a church planting team.