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Dear Partners in Ministry:

April has been a very different month for us. The day that we came to e-mail the last update to you, Andrew was having some pulmonary problems and we took him to the doctor. After his appointment, he asked us to stay in Madang so that he could monitor Andrew for a few days because he was putting Andrew on some strong medicine. Fortunately, there was some PBT housing available and we stayed overnight. The next day I (Todd) drove to Uria in order to take the clothes off of the line, wash some dishes that had been left in the sink, pack our bags and grab a few essentials, like our laptop computer.

We decided to stay in town for R & R, rather than immediately return to Uria. Early in our stay I (Todd) spent four days working with Martha Wade, a fellow PBT missionary who is a linguistic consultant, working through stories that I have been recording and analyzing since we moved here in 1997. We made good progress in gaining deeper understanding of the language structure, which will be of paramount importance when we begin translation later this year. But mostly what we did early on was just to rest and get over the various and sundry sicknesses that were going around our family. I (Todd) worked some with Bob Harper, another fellow missionary, who has been building the kitchen base and upper cupboards for our house. He did all the skilled stuff, I did some of the painting, sanding, and puttying.

I talked with a Somau Garia friend a few days ago about some village issues we have been dealing with these last few months. We are going through a difficult time right now in some of our village relationships. One young man that Todd has invested a lot of time and effort is stirring up trouble among various clans. He is slandering our family, other program workers, and trying to cause dissention in order to get something that he wants. This sort of behavior is the ultimate sin in Melanesian culture. There is a lot of clan infighting right now and no one is sure how things are going to turn out. When I say infighting, I don't mean with spears and bows and arrows, I simply mean relational strife. These troubles are **not** unexpected. We are working with a people who are essentially unsaved, who are very dedicated to the "old" ways of demon worship, offering their children and well being to the local bush gods and allowing the Almighty to fit some other, lesser niche in their worldview. Each person/clan simply is vying for his/their own desires with little consideration of the overall fruits of his actions. We are within a few months of beginning translation of the gospel of Mark. We should expect a fair bit of spiritual opposition. Elections are coming up here in July and a lot of people are feeling skittish about that. The economy and infrastructure of Papua New Guinea continues to decline and people everywhere here are voicing concerns that they will have to return to wearing tree bark loincloths and grass skirts and using bamboo torches if the government falls apart.

We would appreciate your prayers on our behalf. It seems as though all of our teams here in Papua New Guinea have gone through a rather stressful period, and we are by no means exempt. Just yesterday our car was broken into and several irreplaceable things were stolen. Pray that we can be restored emotionally, physically, and spiritually while in town before going back to the village. Pray that we will live wisely each day.

Perhaps, in the various societies of Papua New Guinea, the Father will use the crime, the declining infrastructure, the corrupt politics, the desperation of a people, to draw them from the deception of their bush gods and their own sinfulness to trust in himself. Ask God to help us, each day, to maintain the eternal perspective—the big picture—so that the daily stresses, difficulties, and cultural differences won't take an undue amount of our attention and energy. Ask God to continually draw our attention, affection, and desires to himself. Pray that our focus will be sharp and that we will choose the two or three really useful ministry activities during our next three-month stay in the village, rather than trying twelve activities. We also ask that you pray for God's protection on our family. It is not unheard of for severe opposition to erupt against families when they are at important points in this kind of ministry—like beginning translation. Pray that God's peace will rest upon our family and that we will work from a state of rest, rather than being driven along by needs, wants, and the multiplicity of work to be done while in the village.

We thank each of you for your participation in providing mother-tongue Scriptures for the Somau Garia people of Papua New Guinea. Despite the difficulties, stresses, etc. we feel privileged to be able to serve Jesus with you in this ministry.

Your servants in Christ,

Todd, Angela, Andrew, Samuel, Abigail, and Hannah Owen