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Dear Partners in Ministry:

In pensive moments of late, as the rain ratta-tat-tats on the roof and the day is near its end, I consider the incomprehensible wisdom and character of God and can more clearly see the movement of his Spirit in the lives of my family and me and yes, the Somau Garia people. Some of the reflections are ugly, unspeakable. They show what I do not wish to see and are clouded by shame and remorse. Other reflections shimmer with hope and new life.

I reflect on a confrontation I had a few days ago with some friends. I got word through the village grapevine that a couple of guys had a beef with me and wanted to see me. I suspected that I knew that problem and was incensed that they would be upset with me over such a thing. I decided not to let the sun go down on my anger so I went immediately to them and got right to the point. The confrontation turned out to be for the best—the air was cleared and all of our concerns were taken care of, but I handled the situation like an American—not like a Melanesian—and that’s the rub. Things were set right, but I’m not sure that they understood my heart in the matter—because I communicated like an American. It happens from time to time. It’s hard to undo nearly thirty years of experience—but those moments do smart when the whole point of being here is to walk as Christ walked so that those living in darkness will see the light.

When our discussion was finished, I discovered, much to my relief and chagrin, that they possess a deep loyalty and love for me and my family that could not be rivaled in any other relationship short of blood. For a moment I glimpsed the tremendous potential in these men for the Kingdom—if that loyalty and compassion could be turned toward Jesus—they could be such effective evangelists and witnesses for Christ.

I reflect on our seven year old, Samuel. Samuel has always been a livewire—full of vigor and vitality. At times that vigor has agitated his siblings (and his parents, I admit). Lately we’ve seen him blossom as he has turned that vigor toward serving others with deep affection. I see God’s Spirit and life overflowing in him.

I reflect on Andrew, our oldest, on Abigail and Hannah, our two daughters, and I brim with thanksgiving as I see them growing, learning, loving, and blessing our house with joy and laughter and playfulness. For example, Abigail (who is five) comes up to me and says, “Dad, who is special in our family?” I get ready to tell her that she is, but she supplies the answer first: “God is, because he’s our *real* Father. Aren’t you glad we’re part of *His* family?” or Andrew who just turned nine, “Dad, what is the escape velocity of the space shuttle?” (It happens to be about 17,500 miles per hour, I tell him as I wonder where he comes up with some of these questions.)

I reflect on Angela, my helpmate, best friend, and life-partner. I see a stoutness of heart, an unmovable commitment, a tenderness and compassion, a reflection of Jesus Christ that abounds in the most unlikely moments, moods, and situations.

I reflect on my Somau Garia co-translators Ezekiel, Siramia, Sominak, Kenny, Alex, Parakun, Stanley. I see in them both the frailness and fortitude possible in mankind. I see in them paradox—faithfulness/unfaithfulness, love/bitterness, patience/impatience, commitment/*laissez faire*.

I reflect on you. I think on these last six years—six years ago this month we walked onto a McDonnell Douglas MD-80 and flew from Tulsa to Dallas, and onto Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Port Moresby, Madang. For six years many of you have walked this journey with us. You have cried with us. You have supported us. You have loved on us. You have prayed for us. Just as importantly, you have been standing in the gap for the Somau Garia people. You have seen us through the stages of language and culture learning and are now walking with us through translation of Mark’s Gospel. Thank you.

Hope shimmers in this pool of reflection. The days are hard and long. The weeks stretch into months and years. Yet day by day God is making his wisdom known among the nations and his Kingdom more present each moment. Keep your hands on the plow of prayer, set your faces as flint toward Heaven and turn neither to the left or the right. Keep the faith.

Your servant in Jesus Christ,

Todd for Angela and kids