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Dear Partners in Ministry:

Since the beginning of our training for mission work, one principle has always been drummed into our heads: The key to missions is *flexibility*—with a capital ‘F’. Our experience has proven the truth of that simple statement, which, much to our surprise, we were reminded of once again recently.

We were scheduled to come into Madang toward the end of May for a 3-week stay. We were going to divide the time between translation (for one week), linguistic study (for one week), and general stuff like buying village supplies and going swimming at the resort (one week).

The week of translation went fairly well. Five of our Garia co-translators came into Madang and we worked revising and back-translating the first four chapters of Mark, in preparation for checking the meaning (exegetical check), comprehension by native speakers (village check), and peer check (a fellow PBT missionary checks our work and suggests changes if they are necessary). We worked hard all week and were relatively satisfied with what we were able to accomplish. I was looking forward to Saturday—just to rest, play with the kids, and get ready for the coming week. Our phone service had not been working, so Saturday one of our PBT co-workers came by (at 7:30 a.m.) to tell me that the guys wanted to see me. They were hoping to catch a Public Motor Vehicle (a 3-ton flatbed) home but couldn’t afford to pay the fare—which didn’t matter, as it turns out, because there weren’t any trucks going their way. We decided to drive them to the village and pick up a few things at our house. The trip took about 2 hours (even in dry season). Once we arrived I mowed the grass for an hour or so, sprayed insecticide underneath and around the house, moved a bunch of heavy timbers, etc. When I picked up the lawn mower to put it back in my workshop (which is about 3 feet off of the ground) I pulled a muscle in my lower back. We drove back to town and when I woke up Sunday morning, I felt like someone was twisting a knife in the muscles around my kidneys.

Flexibility. I was now bed-ridden, taking pain killers. No problem, I said to myself, I can still study while on my back. I’ve been doing a bit of review of the relevant literature in preparation for writing an academic paper on certain aspects of Somau Garia grammar—some aspects of the language have boggled me and often the best way to sort them out is to try to write systematically about them. Anyway, week number two entailed more study and less swimming than I would have expected, but was still on target for our goals.

I suppose the greatest need for flexibility and faith, though, came as a result of something we discovered the day after we arrived in Madang: **We are expecting our fifth child!** Andrew, Samuel, Abigail, and Hannah have brought so much joy to our lives—and a lot of warm fuzzies along with it. You fathers know that there is nothing else in the world like a hug from your five-year-old daughter or playing ball with your boys or hearing your child read for the first time. An’ fer us jungle folks ain’t no enertainment lahk harin’ ar two-year-ol’ gal larin’ to talk three languages! Beats Hollywood!

However, this means that our plans have suddenly been thrown into the blender. We originally planned to stay until May 2004. **Now we will be leaving PNG September 2003.** Rather than finishing the gospel of Mark this term, we will have to get to a stopping point (in the checking process) and finish next term. Our plans for gathering suitable material for a presentation have been thrown into fast forward, as a year for preparation has suddenly become three months.

On the other hand, a lot of good will come of it, too. As you can imagine, we’ve been pushing pretty hard over the last year. Having a hiatus from village life will be a welcome change. It will also provide the Garia co-translators opportunity to run the translation program without *overly* depending upon us. (While our participation is necessary (as an

exegete and translation advisor, evangelist, etc.), many aspects of the program can and should be administrated by the Garia themselves. The guys are reluctant to explore those waters). It will provide each of you opportunity to meet Hannah, who will turn three shortly after our arrival in the U.S., and also her new little sibling, due January 29. It will give us opportunity to refocus, fellowship, and renew our relationships (3 years is a long time).

During our time in the U.S. we want to have opportunity to visit with each of you, so we are in the process of deciding when and where we will travel. If you are interested in scheduling us at your church or having us visit with you at your home, please drop an e-mail our way or send a note to our U.S. address (P.O. Box 52, Joplin, MO 64802). We plan on being based in Joplin again and will probably be able to travel some during October and November (we are considering attending the missionary convention in late November). We plan on being with family over the holidays—at which point Angela will be too pregnant to travel. The baby is due January 29, so we won't be hitting the road again until at least mid-March.

For Your Prayers

Prayers

- Ask God to watch over the new life growing in Angela's womb.
- Ask God to give us wisdom and discernment as we close up things in Uria and prepare to leave for a year.
- Ask God to give us wisdom and discernment as we interact with our Garia friends, especially the translators, and as we give them instruction and training in *their* responsibilities while we are gone (I am specifically going to have the guys *rough draft* the gospel of Luke while we are away).
- Ask God to provide a house and a vehicle for us while we are in the U.S.
- Ask God to help us leave the people with a sense of God's love and grace.

Praises

- Praise the Father that, despite all, we have been able to meet our goals for our time in Madang.
- Praise God that despite the social opposition our Garia co-translators are receiving, they continue to serve God through translation of the Scriptures.
- Praise the Father that he is faithful and for his perfect timing in all things.
- Praise the Father for this new life growing in Angela's womb.

We thank each of you for your continuing prayer and financial support. We look forward to spending time with each of you beginning this fall.

Sini xeketikepure xouwopinuku¹,

Todd for Angela, Andrew, Samuel, Abigail, Hannah, and ???

¹Sini xeketikepure xouwopinuku roughly means 'We want to see you all and so we will come.' In other words, 'we'll see y'all later'.