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Dear Partners in Ministry:

Last year we celebrated Thanksgiving with our friends, Chris and Lori Urton, in a little upstairs apartment in the Eastern Highlands of New Guinea. While there, we discussed our plans for the coming year—translation, papers, “sticky wickets” in relating to our village friends, and the like. (Many of you will remember that Chris and Lori work with the Sob people who are linguistically related and live adjacent to the Somau Garia).

In all of our visiting we never considered the outcome of 2004—the unexpected death of my (Todd’s) father, a furlough taken early as a result, the delay in finishing the checking process on Mark and its subsequent printing, the coming of a fifth child, etc. Nonetheless, these things came about and here we are.

Thanksgiving this year was quite different. We could see our breath when we went outside, for one. We spent Thanksgiving with Angela’s family (that meant spending it with 13 of 19—soon to be twenty—young kids). We went to and from Angela’s sister’s house driving across the plains (i.e., not in the mountains) in the right-hand lane while sitting on the left-hand side of the car. We were among like-minded people, family, and an entire country, pausing to celebrate a holiday meant for giving thanks to God, rather than being aliens in a strange land, carrying on curious traditions behind the walls of our village house.

For the first time since returning to the U.S. we have begun to feel settled again, having felt culture shock, disorientation, and fatigue.

For many things we give thanks, not the least of which is each of you. Each month you share in the ministry in one way or another—writing a check, bending your knees in prayer, writing a note or e-mail. Each month we are continually reminded of God’s faithfulness by means of your faithfulness. Each month we also bend a knee and thank God for you. Each month that we minister we are driven to gratitude to God for the variety and immensity of his grace and kindness to us through you.

Thank you, each one, for sharing in the needs, the calling, the challenge of making God’s Word available to the Somau Garia people of Papua New Guinea—word by word, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book. We have a very long way to go before seeing the fruit of our labors and we thank you in advance for the many ways in which we know you will minister to the Somau Garia people through us.

May the Lord bless you and keep you in his good purposes.

Serving you for Jesus’ sake,

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