

The Owen Outreach

Chronicling the Ministry of Todd and Angela Owen

Serving with Pioneer Bible Translators' Papua New Guinea Branch

Translating the New Testament with the Somau Garia People

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Gap Groups—Calling You To Fervent Prayer

The more difficult challenges on the field have always been associated with spiritual conflict—particularly when the truth was shining through the darkness and men were beginning to believe. I remember one occasion when I was meeting with a couple dozen Somau Garia men, mostly in their twenties and thirties. The men were taking hold of the things of God and beginning to grow in faith. We had been meeting for a couple of months when, the opposition started *en force*. One of our friends, Mokisin, had a four-year-old daughter who went from health one day to the death bed the next. Mokisin left the group. One by one, sickness and death struck the families of the men in the group. Before long, men no longer met—the enemy had bullied them into submission. Other arrows in the enemy's quiver—unforgiveness, greed, misunderstanding, strife, adultery, worship of and commitment to false gods, etc.

Most Western churches or schools are somewhat uncomfortable dealing with animistic issues and functionally deny the existence of intermediate spiritual beings (angels and demons) and assign them a place only to history, specifically Bible stories. While not *over-emphasizing* the role of the demonic in animistic societies, we do need to acknowledge that they are actively at the work of *deception* and do carry out the enemy's wishes by using spiritual power to empower their deception.

In the West, the enemy uses different tactics with the same overall strategy. He hides in the shadows but the fruits of his labor and of those who cooperate with him are evident—the incredible power of both Hollywood and Wall Street ought to set us to thinking. Who influences what you buy, how you use your money, how you view yourself or your worth, what you count as success? Hollywood would point to someone under 30, perfect body, athletic—yet able to drink copious amounts of beer and have copious amounts of activity that should only be shared between married folks, fabulously rich, a god/goddess. The Bible would point to someone submitted to Jesus Christ, gray-headed, temperate, wise, selfless, serving God rather than money. Now, how deep has the deception gone in America? How many times have you looked in the mirror and despaired because of the extra twenty pounds, the crooked nose, crooked teeth, ill-proportioned this or that? How many times have you felt ashamed as you are driving an old beat up Chevy instead of a new SUV? How many times have you thought that you would be worth more if you just had a higher paying job or a nose job? The enemy is at work under your very nose if you can only see it.

We are aliens and strangers living amidst a world system set to destroy us. Yet we are not alone. Jesus completed his work on the cross to open the veil and give us access to the Father. The Holy Spirit has been granted us as a down payment of what is to come and as a comforter and intercessor. God has declared us to be reconciled to him and has invited us into the throne room, indeed, that we should come boldly before him, offering thanksgiving, intercession, and supplication.

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Winter 2004

7 Years In Paradise

It must be that God wants me to look like a Garia man that he has allowed so many creases and crevices to mark my face. It couldn't be the stress, the challenges, or the seven years that have elapsed since we first set foot in "paradise", as the Papua New Guineans call their tropical island. Surely not.

Three daughters, countless deaths and tragedies, years of tropical sun have marked Angela as a woman of experience, wisdom, tenderness, mercy. Her eyes sparkle with the impishness of her children and pool with tears as she thinks of and prays for Garia friends, most lost, most in danger of death from the most basic things—like child birth.

Seven years have made a three-year-old boy ten, and his brother eight.

Seven years have brought many beginnings. A people have begun to see a different side of God as the Word becomes, slowly, tediously, available in their own language. A people have begun to see a different side of the world as outsiders live with them, bringing new perspectives, a new message, new social obligations. A people have begun to experience a new spiritual sensation, as God uses preaching, teaching, and the very roughest portions of the Scriptures in the local language to set translators thinking about "what God really meant", and has used that rumination to transform hearts, bit by bit.

Those outsiders have begun to see a different side of both God and the world as they have been shaped by both blessing and tragedy, by love and pain, by grace and opposition—they have begun to lean more to the Father's bosom and less upon their own devices.

What will the next seven years bring? Who is to say, but shall we dream a little? Seven years should bring the Somau Garia Mark, Luke, Acts, and several epistles into print. Seven years might bring a people to the brink of decision and push them over into God's camp. Seven years might bring a vibrant and growing church into being. Seven years might bring new life and a new face to a people desperately needing to be transformed by the power of the gospel.

Will **you** be part of this seven years of transformation? Will you be praying, giving, writing, visiting? Will you be part of a dream come true? God's dream for the Somau Garia people?

You Can Pray

Thanksgiving

- Thank God for the safe arrival and good health of Josie Sharon Owen.
- Thank God that the delivery was relatively easy and that Angela is recovering nicely.
- Thank God that he has provided for and been ever present during the last seven years of ministry in Papua New Guinea.
- Thank God that even now he is raising up praying people who will help establish God's kingdom in the hearts of Garia men and women.

Petitions

- Ask God to nudge the hearts of men and women of prayer to take up the mantle of intercession on behalf of the Somau Garia people and the Owen family.
- Ask God to miraculously provide the funds needed to purchase airline tickets and replace our vehicle.
- Ask God to empower us to encourage and spur on his bride through missions teaching, preaching, and teaching.
- Ask God to continue to protect our family as we travel, speak, and present our ministry to many of you who have supported us over the years.
- Ask God to continue to protect the members of the Somau Garia translation committee from harm, disease, and the social opposition they face on a daily basis.
- Ask God to empower and encourage them men, enabling them to stay at the work of rough drafting the gospel of Luke during our absence.
- Ask God to give us insight, power, and desire to continually press forward into the bosom of the Father.
- Ask God to open the eyes of our hearts so that we may know him better.
- Ask God to bring restoration and renewal to our lives during these months in the United States.
- Ask God to grant us fresh insight into how best to reach the hearts of the Somau Garia.
- Ask God to strengthen us by faith, so that his name might be glorified through our lives.
- Ask God to use our lives and experience to bring good encouragement to those of you who have supported us over the years.
- Ask God to put it on the hearts of many of you to venture to Papua New Guinea for a field visit in the next three years.
- Ask God to protect Angela's best village friend, Koronime Lim, who is pregnant with her sixth child. Many of you will remember that during her last pregnancy she hemorrhaged and almost died (we took her to the hospital in the middle of the night for surgery). She is due in April or May (and we won't be there this time to help if she has trouble).

There and Back Again: Four-Wheel-Drives and Plane Tickets

In your mind's eye, imagine a road which is essentially a heap of red clay. At spots, you see the road rising above your side windows as you drive into holes deep enough to swallow you. Once in a while there is bedrock, with plenty of potholes, just to remind your suspension that washboard is just as destructive as the twisting and torquing your vehicle undergoes every time you drive through a bog, a slime pit, or along a smashed down land-slide. Some seasons of the year the road is better than this. But at least half the year it is not.

This presents an interesting set of problems for us as we need to come and go between the provincial capitol, Madang, and the place where we spend most of our time, Uria village. In 1998 we bought a Nissan Patrol third or fourth hand from a PBT member who was leaving the field. It was already old and well-abused by the time we bought it, and we have put our share of kilometers, bumps, rust spots, and twists to the frame on it. We have maintained it as well as possible, but steel will only flex so many times before it begins to develop stress fractures and things start breaking every 60 or 70 miles or so.

The time has come to replace it and replacing it will not be cheap. We would like to replace it with a Toyota Land Cruiser model 78 or 79 (this is not a year, but a body style). The Land Cruiser has a better clearance, stiffer suspension (which is better for off-road traction), a comparable motor (4.2 L diesel) to our current vehicle. It is not inconceivable that we could get 10 years or more out of a well-maintained or new vehicle. A good used Land Cruiser of a fairly recent model might sell for around K60,000 to K70,000 (about \$18,000 to \$21,000). To buy new would be double or more than that amount.

We have been saving the last few years, but still are needing additional funds to cover vehicle replacement. We are praying that God will provide for this need, **as well as return air fare to Papua New Guinea, which will likely cost around \$6,000.**

If you would like to contribute in addition to your normal contributions, please earmark the extra gift **one-time needs** and we will either apply it to vehicle replacement or air fare.

Contributions can be sent to:

Todd and Angela Owen
Pioneer Bible Translators
P.O. Box 52
Joplin, MO 64802



Include a note with your check designating it for **one-time needs** and make checks payable to **Pioneer Bible Translators**. And, by the way, *thank you for sharing in this important need. Your gift will guarantee that many Somau Garia will be able to get needed medical attention (when we take them into the hospital), that your missionaries will be able to come and go from the village as needed, and that we will not be hindered by being stuck in Madang awaiting replacement parts from overseas.*

Thank you for prayerfully considering sharing in this ministry need.

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Our ability to storm the gates of Hell that threaten and crush those with whom we live and work (in our case the Somau Garia people) depends entirely upon our work before the throne of God.

In Ezekiel 22:30, the Lord declared to Ezekiel the prophet, “I looked for a man who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so that I would not have to destroy it, **but I found none.**” God desired that someone would come and intercede for the land. Although it is almost inconceivable, God has ordained man to be his hands and feet, to do his will in the earth—this has always been true. Moses interceded for Israel in their disobedience, asking God not to destroy them. Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah. In our time, God is making the same request of us: “I’m looking for a man to build up the wall and stand *before me* in the gap . . .” Will he find anyone willing?

I am also making this invitation . . . here . . . now. For six and a half years we have worked with the Somau Garia people. For six and a half years we have had various amounts of victory and retreat.

Here’s what I’m inviting you to do. ① Each missions team needs to locate and designate a group of *interested and motivated* people in the congregation. We’ll call this group a **Gap Group**, that is, a group of people standing *before the Lord* in the gap, interceding for the Somau Garia and the Owen family. ② Each month, beginning in March 2004, I am going to begin publishing the Gap Newsletter—basically a circular enumerating prayer needs and prayer victories. If you are reading this and you are not part of a missions team or do not attend a church that financially or otherwise supports our ministry, we strongly suggest that you begin your own Gap group. Also coming to you in March will be a 30-day prayer guide entitled “Standing in the Gap 2004”. This guide is more general, dealing with common, unchanging needs. The Gap newsletter will deal with specifics. Sometimes things will come up which will require more immediate prayer than simply a monthly newsletter. ③ Each group needs to designate one of its members who has internet access/e-mail. I will set up a group of e-mail addresses in my address book to whom I will send the special bulletins. The designated person receiving the bulletin will then contact the others in the Gap group so that they can pray. ④ Each group also needs to designate someone to photocopy each month’s Gap Newsletter (this will save us a lot of money on printing and postage) and distribute it to the other group members. ⑤ Each group member must commit to pray regularly, both individually and as a group, for the general and specific needs. ⑥ As your groups form up, notify us so that we can get you put into the e-mail address group and so that we can send you adequate numbers of “Standing in the Gap 2004” prayer guides.

Corporate intercession is a biblical practice which needs to be a regular part of our ministry partnership. Let’s join together in the gap for the sake of God’s name being lifted up among the Somau Garia people of Papua New Guinea.

And Her Name Is . . .

Josie Sharon Owen. Josie was her great grandmother’s name, a woman who had a profound impact upon Angela, perhaps the very reason Angela chose to be a missionary. Sharon is her grandmother’s name, a woman of great grace and tenderness, a missionary, preacher’s wife, and remarkable mother.

Josie was born at **6:48 am, January 23**, after a short labor and shorter delivery. She was one of our smaller children, only weighing in at **8 pounds 7 ounces**—but she was long enough at **21¼ inches**.

We are awed, overjoyed, relieved, excited, humbled. God couldn’t create a more humbling atmosphere for spiritual growth than to put fragile, helpless, innocent children into our arms and say, “Here, teach them to love me.” That responsibility makes me tremble with both joy and (appropriate) fear. Praise the Lord with us for Josie.



Hannah gets to “hold” her new baby sister, Josie, for the first time. I guess her smile says it all and speaks for all of us. Hannah smiles—I get misty-eyed and choked-up.

What a tender joy it is to be surrounded by our children, to watch them grow, to see the mystery of God’s creative power at work every day. Wow . . .