

Watchman's Brief: *First Edition*

# DUTY OF CARE

— AS FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP —

*A Biblical Mandate for Mission Agency Executives*

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Known as a visionary leader and strategic thinker, Scott has launched and led several influential initiatives serving the global mission community. He combines foresight, collaboration, and practical wisdom to inspire teams to pursue innovative solutions to complex challenges. As a trusted change-maker, Scott builds strong partnerships across ministries, government agencies, and international networks, empowering others to pursue bold, long-term Kingdom impact with confidence and clarity.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY<sup>1</sup>

While the call of the Gospel is to go,<sup>2</sup> **God's heart is for His people to thrive where He calls them and remain effective where He plants them.**<sup>3</sup> This ability to “thrive” makes the ministry and work of evangelical mission organizations challenging in both traditionally open environments and in complex environments that are often resistant to gospel influence, involve political instability, pose varying levels of security threats, involve cross-cultural stress, and require great personal sacrifice. While missionary calling frequently emphasizes courage, obedience, and willingness to endure hardship, mission leaders must also recognize a biblical mandate to care for those entrusted to their leadership. Within contemporary organizational language, this responsibility is often described as the duty of care; the obligation of leaders to protect the well-being of personnel under their authority.

For mission executives, duty of care should not be viewed merely as a legal requirement or administrative function. Rather, **it is a theological responsibility grounded in the biblical model of shepherding leadership.** Scripture consistently portrays leaders as stewards who must care for, protect, and guide those entrusted to them by the Lord. When mission executives faithfully fulfill this responsibility, they not only steward people well before the Lord but also strengthen organizational effectiveness and reduce legal liability associated with negligence

This paper contends that **duty of care serves as both a biblical mandate and a practical necessity, forming the central thesis for mission leadership.** By integrating biblical leadership principles and comprehensive organizational practices—such as the Security in the Context of Ministry (SICM) framework—mission executives faithfully steward personnel, strengthen resilience, and preserve the credibility of their gospel witness. The discussion will explore how calling, ethical leadership, accountability, and risk stewardship contribute to this central responsibility and identify practical areas for developing robust duty-of-care programs.

## INTRODUCTION

Evangelical mission agencies send personnel into risk-prone environments, including regions with political instability, persecution, natural disasters, or complex cultures. While such realities have shaped global missions for centuries, modern organizational expectations highlight duty of care: the obligation to ensure personnel safety and well-being.

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<sup>1</sup> Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 28:19.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 37:3; 92:13-14; Jeremiah 29:4-7; etc.

Duty of care is commonly discussed in legal and risk management contexts, yet for Christian mission organizations, **it carries a deeper theological significance.** Scripture repeatedly emphasizes that leaders are entrusted with the responsibility of caring for those under their authority. The biblical metaphor of the shepherd captures this responsibility clearly: **leaders are called to protect, guide, and nurture the flock entrusted to them by God.**

Mission executives, therefore, operate within a dual framework of responsibility. On one hand, they must ensure their organizations comply with legal and professional standards of care. On the other hand, they must recognize that their leadership is ultimately accountable to God, who entrusts them with the lives and well-being of those serving in His mission.

**A biblically grounded understanding of duty of care fulfills spiritual responsibilities while strengthening organizational resilience and reducing legal liability.** When mission leaders integrate biblical principles with structured risk management (such as the Security in the Context of Ministry (SICM) framework described below), mission effectiveness and personnel well-being flourish.

## **BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF DUTY OF CARE**

The biblical concept most closely aligned with duty of care is the model of **shepherding leadership.** Throughout Scripture, leaders are described as shepherds responsible for the welfare of those under their care.

In Acts 20:28, the apostle Paul instructs church leaders to “pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock... to care for the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood.” This passage highlights both the seriousness of leadership responsibility and the value God places on those under their care.

Similarly, the apostle Peter exhorts leaders to “shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.”<sup>4</sup> Leadership, therefore, is not defined by authority or control but by faithful stewardship and service.

The Old Testament also contains strong warnings against negligent leadership. In Ezekiel 34, God condemns shepherds who fail to care for the flock, declaring that they “neglected the weak, failed to heal the injured, and did not search for the lost.”<sup>5</sup> This passage

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter 5:2-3.

<sup>5</sup> Ezekiel 34:2-6.

demonstrates that **leaders who neglect their responsibility to care for others face divine Judgement.**

The model for such leadership ultimately appears in Jesus Christ, who describes Himself as the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep.<sup>6</sup> Christ's example establishes the ethical foundation for Christian leadership: the welfare of the flock takes precedence over the shepherd's comfort or convenience.

For mission agency executives, this biblical imagery underscores that **leadership involves responsibility for advancing the mission as well as for protecting and caring for those called to serve.**

## CALLING AND ITS IMPACT ON DUTY OF CARE

Within evangelical missions, the concept of calling plays a central role in motivating service. Missionaries frequently view their work as an act of obedience to a divine calling, which inspires perseverance and sacrificial commitment. However, calling can be misunderstood in ways that undermine duty of care. **Workers may accept hardship or danger as unavoidable. Still, Scripture never excuses leaders from their responsibility to care for those under them, including the broader needs of the organization in light of the individual risks faced by field personnel.**

The presence of calling should increase, not diminish, leaders' responsibility to provide wise oversight. Paul's instructions to Timothy illustrate this, reminding leaders to manage responsibilities carefully and to demonstrate faithful stewardship in every aspect of their leadership.<sup>7</sup>

Mission executives must therefore affirm that calling and care are not competing priorities. Rather, they are complementary. **When leaders take their responsibility to prepare, support, and protect those they send seriously, they show respect for both the missionary's calling and the God who called them.**

## DUTY OF CARE AND ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION

Duty of care must be integrated into an organization's mission and vision rather than treated as a secondary administrative function. When organizations separate mission advancement from personnel care, they risk creating cultures that unintentionally sacrifice people to achieve organizational goals. A biblical understanding of mission rejects such a separation. The Great Commission calls believers to make disciples of all nations, yet the

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<sup>6</sup> John 10:11.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Timothy 4:6, 16; 1 Timothy 6:20–21; 2 Timothy 2:2; 2 Timothy 4:5.

New Testament simultaneously emphasizes the importance of mutual care within the body of Christ.<sup>8</sup>

**Mission organizations, therefore, demonstrate theological integrity when they embed duty of care into their strategic priorities.** This integration may involve several practices: First, leadership must incorporate risk assessment and security planning into strategic decision-making. Mission expansion into new regions should be accompanied by thoughtful evaluation of potential threats and the development of appropriate mitigation strategies.<sup>9</sup>

Second, organizations must ensure that adequate resources are allocated for personnel support. Training, counseling services, crisis response structures, and security preparation require financial investment.

Third, leaders must cultivate a culture that values transparency and communication. Field workers should feel free to report concerns or risks without fear that doing so will be perceived as weakness or lack of faith.

When mission agencies use these practices, they show that advancing God's mission and caring for the people involved are inseparable responsibilities.

## SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF MINISTRY (SICM)

### A Theological Framework for Risk Stewardship

While secular risk management frameworks offer valuable tools for organizational safety, evangelical mission agencies must approach security through a theological lens that reflects the nature of ministry itself. Nearly twenty years ago, I developed the Security in the Context of Ministry (SICM) framework, which proposes that mission security should not be treated merely as a technical function or compliance exercise **but as a theological expression of pastoral stewardship within mission leadership.**

Traditional security models often operate from institutional priorities such as liability reduction, operational continuity, or asset protection. While these concerns are legitimate, mission organizations operate within a different paradigm in which people, calling, and the integrity of the gospel witness are primary considerations. **SICM reframes security not as**

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew 28:18–20; Galatians 6:2.

<sup>9</sup> While Nehemiah's rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1-4) is the premier example of integrating security into a strategic mission, Joseph's management of the famine in Egypt (Genesis 41) illustrates long-term strategic planning to mitigate a known, impending crisis. In the New Testament, Jesus taught and modeled that leadership requires assessing the risk and cost of a mission (Matthew 10:16; Luke 14:28-30; John 7:1). Likewise, the Apostle Paul regularly demonstrated the need to evaluate threats and manage risks (Acts 9:25; 23:12-15).

**a constraint on ministry but as an essential component of faithful stewardship, holding the Gospel as the highest value, safety as the highest priority, and the Great Commission advance as the highest commitment.**

The central thesis of SICM is that mission security is fundamentally a form of shepherding leadership exercised through responsible risk stewardship. This perspective emerges directly from biblical leadership models. Scripture consistently portrays leaders as shepherds responsible for protecting the flock entrusted to them. The shepherd metaphor implies vigilance, foresight, and the willingness to act decisively in the presence of danger. When leaders fail in this responsibility, Scripture condemns them as negligent shepherds who allow harm to come to those under their care.<sup>10</sup>

Within this theological framework, security planning becomes an extension of pastoral care. Mission leaders who proactively evaluate risk, prepare personnel, and establish crisis response systems practice a form of shepherding that protects both the mission and the people involved.

### **Core Principles of SICM**

The SICM framework operates through several interrelated principles that translate biblical leadership concepts into operational practice.

#### **1. Risk stewardship rather than risk aversion**

The first principle of SICM is that mission leaders must pursue **risk stewardship rather than risk aversion or risk elimination**. Christian mission has always involved risk. The Apostle Paul repeatedly encountered persecution, imprisonment, and physical danger during his missionary journeys. Yet Paul did not approach ministry recklessly. Instead, he frequently demonstrated careful planning, situational awareness, and strategic decision-making.<sup>11</sup>

For example, Paul often altered travel routes when threats emerged and relied on local networks for protection and guidance.<sup>12</sup> These actions illustrate that faithful ministry does not require reckless exposure to danger but rather thoughtful risk management.

SICM therefore encourages leaders to **ask not only whether risk exists but also whether it is being stewarded wisely**. Leaders must evaluate the legitimacy of ministry objectives alongside the potential consequences for personnel and local partners. Such evaluation honors both the missionary calling and the responsibility to protect those involved in ministry.

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<sup>10</sup> Acts 20:28.

<sup>11</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:23–28.

<sup>12</sup> Acts 9:23–25; Acts 23:12–24.

## 2. The integration of mission and security

A second principle of SICM is that **mission and security must be integrated rather than treated as competing priorities**. In many organizations, security is viewed as an external regulatory function imposed on ministry operations. This perception can create resistance among field personnel who fear that security measures will limit ministry effectiveness.

SICM rejects this dichotomy. Instead, it argues that effective security practices actually **enable sustainable ministry**. When personnel are trained in situational awareness, communication protocols, and crisis preparedness, they are better equipped to operate effectively in challenging environments. This integration also strengthens trust between leadership and field personnel. Workers who know that their organization prioritizes their safety are more likely to remain engaged, resilient, and effective in long-term ministry.

## 3. Contextual intelligence

The third principle of SICM emphasizes the importance of **contextual intelligence**. Mission work takes place within complex environments shaped by political realities, cultural dynamics, and social tensions. Security decisions that fail to account for these realities may inadvertently increase risk.

Biblical mission strategy itself demonstrates contextual awareness. **Paul regularly adapted his approach based on the cultural and political contexts in which he ministered**. In Athens, he engaged in philosophical discourse with Greek thinkers; in Jewish contexts, he reasoned from the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, mission organizations must invest in understanding the environment where they serve. Contextual intelligence may include monitoring political developments, understanding local power structures, cultivating relationships with local partners, analyzing patterns of hostility or instability, and using threat intelligence wisely. Providing ample time for language learning equips missionaries to engage in more effective conversations with locals, leading to improved relationships and, in turn, better contextual intelligence. Likewise, cultivating trust with local believers is important for acceptance in the community and the safety that acceptance provides. Conversely, local believers may choose **not to share** contextual intelligence if:

- They're used to being treated dismissively
- They feel their advice will be disregarded
- They doubt information will be conveyed to the intended audience (ex. up the chain of command)

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<sup>13</sup> Acts 17:22–31.

In these ways, contextual intelligence enables leaders to make informed decisions that protect personnel while preserving ministry opportunities.

#### **4. Organizational preparedness**

Preparedness represents another essential component of SICM. Responsible mission leadership requires anticipating potential crises and preparing organizational responses before emergencies occur.

Preparedness may involve developing evacuation plans, establishing emergency communication systems, training personnel in crisis response, and maintaining relationships with external security and medical resources.

**These practices reflect the biblical principle of prudence.** Proverbs repeatedly commends foresight and preparation, declaring that “the prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.”<sup>14</sup> Within the context of mission leadership, preparedness is therefore not an expression of fear but of wisdom.

#### **5. Accountability before God and community**

The final principle of SICM is **accountability**. Mission leaders are accountable not only to organizational boards and donors but ultimately to the Lord of Hosts. Scripture warns that those who lead God’s people will face stricter judgment for their actions.<sup>15</sup>

This accountability reinforces the importance of transparency and evaluation within mission organizations. Leaders must be willing to review security decisions, learn from past incidents, and invite external expertise when necessary. Accountability structures, such as governing boards, external audits, and independent risk assessments, help ensure that the duty of care remains a consistently exercised organizational priority.

### **SICM as a Model of Missional Leadership**

When viewed holistically, SICM represents more than a set of security practices. It offers a **model of missional leadership rooted in biblical stewardship**. This model recognizes that mission leaders hold responsibility in three interrelated areas:

1. Stewardship of the Gospel mission
2. Stewardship of the people who serve that mission
3. Stewardship of the environment in which ministry occurs

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<sup>14</sup> Proverbs 22:3.

<sup>15</sup> James 3:1.

Neglecting any of these responsibilities weakens the integrity of the mission. For example, organizations that prioritize rapid expansion without adequate care for personnel may experience burnout, moral failure, or other crises that undermine their witness. Conversely, organizations that overemphasize institutional protection at the expense of the mission risk losing their missional focus. Before expanding operations into a new area, look at which Christian organizations have been there the longest and if they have recommendations for member care. Are your organization's programs potentially redundant or in conflict with programs of other established Christian organizations in the area? How are established organizations managing risk?

SICM seeks to maintain balance by recognizing that **faithful mission requires both courage and wisdom**.

### **Duty of Care through the Lens of SICM**

When applied to duty of care, SICM reframes the responsibilities of mission executives in several important ways.

First, it encourages leaders to see personnel care as **central to mission strategy** rather than peripheral. Protecting missionaries and staff enables long-term sustainability of ministry.

Second, it emphasizes that **organizational negligence is both a moral and theological failure**. When leaders ignore foreseeable risks or fail to adequately prepare personnel, they violate the shepherding responsibilities described in Scripture.

Third, SICM highlights that effective duty of care also protects the **credibility of the gospel witness**. High-profile crises stemming from preventable negligence can erode public trust and hinder ministry efforts.

By integrating security thinking with biblical leadership principles, SICM provides a framework for mission executives to fulfill their responsibilities with faithfulness.

### **Practical Implications for Mission Agency Executives**

For executives responsible for global mission organizations, the SICM framework suggests several practical implications. Leaders must ensure that **security considerations are represented at the executive level of decision-making** rather than delegated solely to operational departments. Strategic decisions about field expansion, partnerships, and personnel deployment should include risk analysis.

Executives must also cultivate **organizational cultures that value preparedness and transparency**. Personnel should feel empowered to report risks, share concerns, and participate in security training without fear of being perceived as lacking faith or commitment.

Finally, mission executives should pursue **ongoing organizational learning**. Security environments evolve rapidly, and organizations must remain adaptable. Regular reviews of policies, training programs, and crisis responses help ensure that duty of care remains effective.

### **Theological Significance of SICM**

Ultimately, the importance of SICM lies not merely in its practical utility but in its theological significance. The framework reflects the biblical conviction that leadership involves stewardship of the lives entrusted to us by God.

When mission executives faithfully practice risk stewardship, contextual awareness, preparedness, and accountability, they demonstrate a form of leadership that reflects the character of Christ. Jesus described Himself as the Good Shepherd who protects and cares for His sheep.<sup>16</sup> Mission leaders who emulate this model embody the same pastoral concern for those entrusted to them. In this sense, duty of care is not simply organizational policy—it is **an expression of worshipful obedience to God**.

## **ETHICAL AND MORAL STANDARDS FOR MISSION EXECUTIVES**

Mission leaders are entrusted with significant influence, and Scripture consistently emphasizes that leaders must demonstrate exceptional integrity.<sup>17</sup> Paul instructs Timothy that overseers must be “above reproach,” demonstrating moral maturity and responsible leadership.<sup>18</sup> These expectations extend beyond personal morality to include the way leaders treat those under their authority.

Ethical leadership within mission organizations includes several key dimensions. First, leaders must demonstrate transparency and honesty in decision-making. Personnel deserve accurate information regarding risks, expectations, and organizational policies. Second, executives must ensure financial integrity in the stewardship of donor resources and organizational budgets. Third, leaders must cultivate organizational cultures of care that prioritize the well-being of personnel and their families. When leaders model ethical conduct and self-care, they reinforce the credibility of the gospel and strengthen the trust of those they lead.

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<sup>16</sup> John 10:11.

<sup>17</sup> Titus 1:7–8.

<sup>18</sup> 1 Timothy 3:2.

## CHILD SAFEGUARDING AS A CORE EXPRESSION OF BIBLICAL DUTY OF CARE

One of the most critical and often overlooked dimensions of duty of care within mission organizations is the safeguarding of children. **For evangelical mission agencies, child protection is not merely a regulatory requirement or administrative policy but a direct reflection of biblical responsibility toward the most vulnerable members of the community.**

Scripture consistently portrays God as the defender of the vulnerable, particularly children, widows, and the marginalized. The Psalms describe God as “a father of the fatherless and protector of widows.”<sup>19</sup> Divine care sets a moral foundation that Christian institutions must adhere to. Those in leadership roles are obliged to embody God's nurturing nature for the vulnerable.

Jesus Himself made it clear how important it is to protect children. In one of His strongest warnings, Jesus said that anyone who leads a child astray will face serious, even terrible, consequences.<sup>20</sup> Jesus' warning demonstrates how much God cares about the safety and well-being of children.

It is evident from these biblical teachings that ensuring children's safety should be integrated into all aspects of an organization's culture, policies, and management, especially for those in leadership positions. Neglecting this duty not only endangers children but also signifies a failure in our duty as Christian caretakers.

Mission groups often work in diverse cultural settings where child protection measures may differ significantly. In such cases, organizational leaders shoulder an even greater responsibility to implement robust safeguarding frameworks. Effective child protection programs typically include thorough background screening, mandatory safeguarding training, reporting mechanisms, and clear protocols for responding to allegations of abuse.<sup>21</sup>

Ensuring the safety of children goes beyond merely having appropriate policies in place. A strong culture of safeguarding is nurtured when organizational leaders actively hold themselves accountable and are transparent about their dedication. By placing a high value on child protection and fostering an environment that welcomes discussions on the topic, leaders establish a workplace where staff members feel comfortable voicing concerns and are confident that those concerns will be addressed seriously.

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<sup>19</sup> Psalm 68:5.

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 18:6.

<sup>21</sup> US Department of Justice, “What You Need to Know About Background Screening,” Pages 3-5, Accessed March 10, 2026. <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/content.ashx/cops-p260-pub.pdf>

Safeguarding children also protects the organization's reputation and plays a critical role in preserving the credibility of gospel witness. Scandals involving abuse or negligence have caused profound damage to Christian institutions worldwide.<sup>22</sup> Such failures not only harm victims but also undermine trust within the organization while undermining the organization's moral authority in the communities it seeks to serve.

Thus, it is essential for mission leadership to consider child safeguarding as a fundamental element of their duty of care. Safeguarding children under their supervision allows mission agencies to show reverence to the Lord by exemplifying the kindness, fairness, and protection that reflect the principles of God's kingdom.

## **STRICTER JUDGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Scripture warns that those who teach and lead God's people will face stricter judgment. This sobering reality highlights the importance of accountability in mission leadership. Mission executives make decisions that affect the lives of personnel, their families, and the communities they serve. The weight of these responsibilities requires humility and a willingness to seek counsel.

Healthy organizations establish accountability structures, including governing boards, external audits, risk assessments, and leadership peer review. These mechanisms provide safeguards that protect both personnel and the organization itself.

Accountability also fosters organizational learning and prevents leadership isolation. Leaders who invite feedback and evaluation demonstrate a commitment to faithful stewardship.

## **DUTY OF CARE TOWARD NATIONAL STAFF AND LOCAL BELIEVERS**

Another important dimension of duty of care involves the relationship between expatriate mission organizations and the national staff and/or local believers who serve alongside Great Commission expats. In many mission contexts, local staff members, translators, church leaders, and ministry partners bear significant risk because of their association with expatriate missionaries.

This reality raises a significant ethical and theological question for mission executives: To what extent should Great Commission organizations which train, equip, encourage, and

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<sup>22</sup> Renato Vera Osuna, "Public Perception and Trust in U.S. Religious Institutions Post-Abuse Scandals: Implications for Prevention and the Recovery of Credibility," Accessed March 10, 2026. <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.908000157>

hold local believers accountable in their evangelistic engagement, also assume responsibility for preparing local believers to reduce their vulnerability to the threats they face by offering personal security training, or by supporting and resourcing incident responses involving national partners or staff? From a biblical perspective, the answer begins with the recognition that all believers possess equal value and dignity before God.

Scripture teaches that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, but that all are one in Christ Jesus.<sup>23</sup> This foundational theological principle should inform how Christian organizations approach duty of care with their local partners and staff. Yet historically, mission organizations have sometimes operated with structural inequalities that inadvertently privilege expatriate personnel over local partners. **While expatriates may receive extensive security training, evacuation planning, and crisis response support, national partners and staff may be left with fewer protections despite facing equal or greater risk in Great Commission engagement.** Such disparities raise important ethical concerns. If mission leaders truly believe that all members of the body of Christ possess equal worth before God, then should an organization's duty of care extend to all individuals involved in ministry programs and engagement, regardless of nationality or employment status?

The New Testament itself demonstrates the importance of partnership between cross-cultural workers and local believers. The apostle Paul consistently relied upon local leaders and co-workers in his missionary efforts.<sup>24</sup> Figures such as Timothy, Titus, Priscilla, Aquila, and numerous unnamed believers served as essential co-laborers in the spread of the Gospel.<sup>25</sup> These partnerships were characterized not by hierarchy but by mutual respect and commitment to the mission of Christ.

For modern mission organizations, this biblical model suggests that national staff and local believers should be treated as full partners in ministry rather than secondary participants. It would stand to reason, then, that some level of duty of care protections in areas such as security training, crisis response planning, and pastoral care could also be appropriate for local partners, regardless of formal employment status. This does not necessarily mean that every response must be identical. Legal, logistical, and cultural realities may shape how organizations equip, support, and respond to incidents involving national staff. At a minimum, mission executives should consider whether organizational policies reflect a consistent commitment to dignity, fairness, and compassion toward local partners and staff.

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<sup>23</sup> Galatians 3:28.

<sup>24</sup> Throughout the Book of Acts, Paul is never portrayed as a solo missionary. Instead, Paul is documented relying heavily on local leaders, trusted co-workers, and regional representatives who helped plant, strengthen, and govern churches. Examples include: Acts 11:25–26; Acts 13:1–3; Acts 14:14; 15:40–41; Acts 16–18; 1 Thessalonians 3:1–2; and Philippians 2:19–22.

<sup>25</sup> Acts 16:1–3; Romans 16:3–5; Philippians 2:19–22.

When crises occur, such as detention, persecution, or violence, organizations should carefully consider how their response to these threats communicates the value they place on local partners. When the organization provides support and resources in times of crisis, such as advocacy, pastoral support, legal assistance, or family care, it demonstrates that national partners and staff are not expendable instruments of the mission but valued members of the body of Christ. From a leadership perspective, extending duty of care to national staff also strengthens long-term ministry sustainability. Trust and partnership flourish when local believers know that the organizations they serve alongside are committed to their well-being.

Ultimately, mission agencies must recognize that the credibility of their witness depends not only on the message they proclaim but also on how they treat those who labor alongside them. Faithful stewardship demands that duty of care extend beyond expatriate personnel, encompassing all who participate in the work of the Gospel, spurred on by the organization's local ministries.

## **AVOIDING NEGLIGENCE IN LEADERSHIP**

Negligence occurs when leaders fail to exercise reasonable care in protecting those under their authority. Within mission organizations, negligence can take several forms, including inadequate preparation, insufficient training, poor communication, or failure to respond appropriately to known risks.

Legal scholars note that organizations have a duty to provide reasonable protection and care for employees and volunteers operating under their authority.<sup>26</sup> When organizations ignore foreseeable risks, they expose themselves to both legal liability and moral failure.

Biblical leadership rejects negligence because it contradicts the shepherding model described in Scripture. The Good Shepherd does not abandon the flock when danger arises. Instead, He protects and guides the sheep entrusted to Him. Mission executives, therefore, demonstrate faithful leadership when they implement and manage well safety, security, and care systems that protect personnel and support sustainable ministry. This responsibility includes providing thorough pre-field and on-field orientation for new field members, regardless of staff secondment status.

## **ADDITIONAL PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR MISSION EXECUTIVES**

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<sup>26</sup> David W. Miller and David O. Oyedepo, "Faith-Based Organizations and the Law," (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Developing a comprehensive duty of care program requires attention to several practical areas, including:

**Psychological concerns.** Mission personnel often face psychological stress, trauma, and isolation, especially when serving in high-risk environments. Organizations should consider offering access to counseling, resilience training, and peer support networks.

**Family care.** Healthy families are essential for effective ministry. The well-being of spouses and children greatly impacts missionary effectiveness and their long-term commitment.

**Security and crisis management.** Organizations should develop security management programs and crisis response plans that include pre-determined stay-go benchmarks, evacuation procedures, medical response coordination, and emergency communication systems.

**Digital and information security.** Digital security is increasingly vital as sensitive information and communication channels can expose personnel to risks.

**Post-field care.** To help develop resilience, mission agencies must focus on post-field care to assist returning missionaries with reintegration challenges and emotional transitions.

When these areas receive adequate attention, organizations create environments where personnel can serve effectively and sustainably.

## CONCLUSION

Duty of care within evangelical mission organizations is far more than a legal requirement or administrative responsibility. Duty of care is a biblical mandate grounded in the shepherding model of leadership demonstrated throughout Scripture.

Mission executives are entrusted with the lives and well-being of those who serve in God's global mission. Faithful leadership at all levels of the organization requires vigilance, humility, ethical integrity, and proactive care for the people under their authority.

By integrating biblical principles with practical frameworks such as Security in the Context of Ministry, mission leaders can create organizations that protect personnel, strengthen resilience, and sustain effective ministry.

Ultimately, duty of care represents an act of worship. When leaders faithfully protect and support those who serve in ministry, they reflect the character of Christ—the Good Shepherd who demonstrated the ultimate care for His flock by giving Himself freely for their redemption.



# CONCILIUM



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