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# Risk Tolerance, Risk Capacity, and the Sacred Work of the Kingdom Security Professional

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**CONCILIUM**

## The Most Important Work of the Kingdom Security Professional

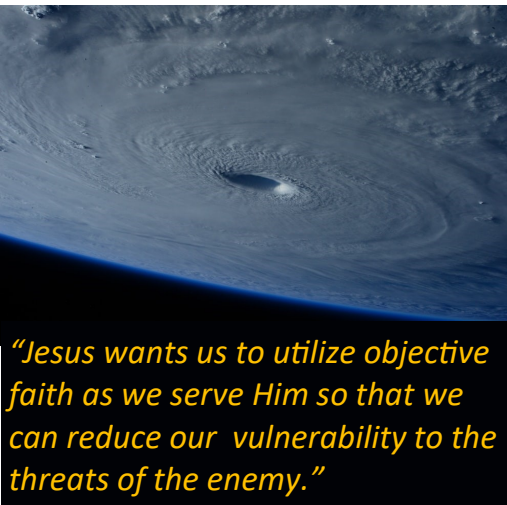
Here are three of the most important actions a Kingdom Security Professional can take to help gospel workers thrive on the mission field:

1. Help them understand the difference between risk tolerance and risk capacity.
2. Help them understand that walking with God in Great Commission obedience is a practice of objective faith and not blind faith.
3. Take proactive steps to abate and mitigate “predictable tragedies” on the mission field.



If we are to count the cost of serving Jesus effectively and accurately, we must understand the difference between risk tolerance and risk capacity. To that end, Jesus wants us to utilize objective faith as we serve Him so that we can reduce our vulnerability to the threats of the enemy. When we practice objective faith, we can INCREASE the extent of our obedience as we mitigate the risks associated with God’s call to go. This is the heart of Security in the Context of Ministry (SICM).

Unfortunately, it would seem today that many Christians do not fully comprehend God's guidance on faith and risk taking. This is why far too many Christians take (and succumb to) foolish risks rooted in blind faith that God neither requires nor honors from His people.



*“Jesus wants us to utilize objective faith as we serve Him so that we can reduce our vulnerability to the threats of the enemy.”*

### Risk Tolerance vs Risk Capacity and the Reality of Kingdom Ministry

Risk tolerance is an individual’s or organization’s willingness to take on risk in order to achieve their objectives. Risk capacity is an individual’s or organization’s ability to bear, or endure the consequences of, the risks they take.

There can be significant differences between team members of mission organizations when it comes to risk tolerance. These differences of willingness to take on risk are often rooted in disagreements over the actual, or even the perceived, level of risk associated with a specific ministry or activity on the mission field. It is then that the differences in risk tolerance between field team members or field staff vs home office leadership are exposed. It is in these disagreements that I find the greatest friction in my security consulting for Gospel organizations: either missionaries desire to push further than the organization will allow, OR the organization wants the individual missionary to push beyond where they are comfortable. Both scenarios are a mess to untangle and resolve.

Navigating disagreements and conflicting opinion or information regarding risk levels is a difficult task. This is not the time to compound the situation with a lack of mutual understanding and agreement regarding risk tolerance. It is vitally important for both the individual missionary and the organization to clearly communicate with one another their personal and corporate theology of risk—in advance of necessitating circumstances—in order to better define their respective risk tolerances and expectations. It is especially critical to define these risk tolerances prior to a crisis incident that requires stay-go decision making.

Risk capacity is an altogether separate, but equally important, issue from risk tolerance. Those familiar with the movie *Top Gun* might remember a scene where the Captain of an aircraft carrier rebukes a young pilot named Maverick. He yells, “Your ego is writing checks your body can’t cash!” That metaphorical ‘check cashing’ is akin to risk capacity. Practical and productive risk capacity successfully communicates what the individual or organization can endure in light of what the individual or organization desires to accomplish. In other words, risk capacity considers such important matters as the loss of life, financial ramifications, legal standing, and reputation preservation when determining risk thresholds in goal setting toward mission accomplishment.



## Practicing Objective Faith: The Practical Application of Theology to Risk Management

There is a significant difference between saving faith that comes by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8) and the kind of faith rooted in wisdom and prudence necessary for gospel obedience (1 Peter 4:10). Confusion, and sometimes dire consequences, can occur when a Christian tries to apply the principles of saving faith to the practice of risk management in Great Commission service.

The objective faith of 1 Peter 4:10, as it applies to counting the cost of following Jesus, is an “eyes open” endeavor. As faithful stewards of God’s grace, Jesus warns his disciples to count the cost of obedience as spelled out in Luke 14:25–33. Jesus even curbs the enthusiasm of one individual who would follow Him blindly. When the man says to Jesus, “I will follow you wherever you go,” Jesus does not reply, “Come, follow Me.” Instead, Jesus challenges the man to count the cost of his decision. Jesus says to the man, “Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Luke 9:57-58).

It is important to understand that, when it comes to Great Commission service, God neither asks for blind faith nor honors blind faith from His children. Sadly, this truth has often been misunderstood by missionaries, myself included. I am sure many of us have stories of what equates to blind faith and foolish risk taking in mission endeavors. Thankfully, in my examples at least, God’s grace abounded and everything turned out ok. However, when we do something foolish, even in the name of Jesus, we cannot guarantee God’s grace will always abound each time in the same way as it did before.

To put it another way, when Christians apply to the practice of risk management the faith/trust principles associated with saving faith, vs the principles of wisdom necessary for objective faith, the result can lead to a type of blind faith that finds Christians justifying their risk decisions through past demonstrations of God’s grace that God never intended to be reproduceable; then or today. This practice can place the Christian in a dangerous position of either trying to prove their faithfulness to God by taking unnecessary risks God never sanctioned, or expecting God to maintain their safety in ways that God never said He would provide.

What is the potential result? When God does not provide His grace in a way the Christian expected based on their own flawed understanding and expectations, doubt and even anger toward God can set in. Once doubt and anger set in, Satan can use these to lead the Christian toward disillusionment with God’s love and grace. In the worst cases I have seen, disillusionment leads to a rejection of God’s love and authority and even the rejection of their faith altogether. It is important to remember that Satan eagerly seeks to capitalize on the emotional and spiritual distress that the consequences of blind faith can create. The evil one is always looking for ways to cause the believer to question God’s faithfulness, mistrust God’s goodness, abandon the call of the Great Commission, and even doubt their own salvation.

When Satan manipulates people in these circumstances, he usually does so through their emotions and the weak points of their character. This manipulation is often expressed as anger, pain, and grief through self-induced moral injury towards God. The individual feels that God produced, or failed to prevent, an incident that contradicted their expectations of the Lord’s provision, even though their expectations were rooted in a misunderstanding of God’s word and false expectations of God’s protection in the first place. I have seen this far too many times over the years, especially when associated with traumatic

experiences. This is heartbreaking to me because many of those situations could have been prevented with a better understanding of God’s word and the practice of risk management principles rooted in objective faith; an objective faith that Jesus commands us to practice as an act of worship as we steward well the opportunities the Lord provides us.

When it comes to gauging risk, we have to understand that risk is found where vulnerability and threat meet. God’s people are often vulnerable because they are seeking to serve God in dangerous places with many threats. The evil one uses those threats to inhibit the work of the Saints. Because of this, Christians must remember the warning of 1 Peter 5:8, that their enemy is a “roaring lion prowling around looking for those he can



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“The role of the security-risk manager is not to remove risk from the equation of Great Commission obedience. Instead, the security-risk manager’s role is to remove uncertainty from the decision-making process toward Kingdom obedience.”

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devour.” This is exactly why Jesus warns us to “be on our guard” as we are “shrewd as serpents yet gentle as doves” (Matthew 10:16). To embrace Matthew 10:16 and mitigate 1 Peter 5:8, Jesus wants us to utilize objective faith in our obedience to Him. That way, with objectivity, we can tangibly reduce our vulnerability to the threats we face. By reducing our vulnerability to the threats we face we can increase our ministry in dangerous places. This is risk mitigation. As we mitigate the risks where we are called to serve, we can increase our capacity associated with God’s call to go!

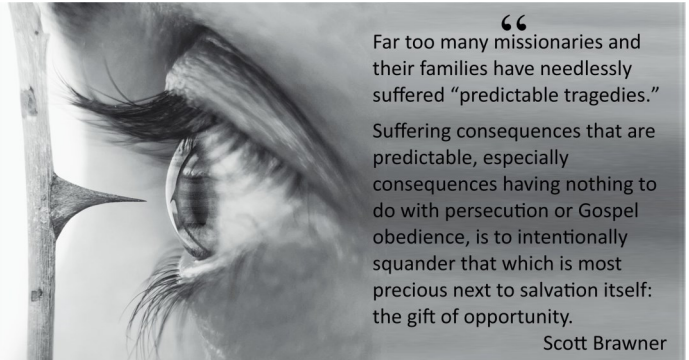
Please note that nowhere in this writing have I stated, “Don’t go, it’s too risky.” The opposite is true. The Great Commission demands risk. We will never see every language, people, tribe, and nation worship the Lord Jesus Christ apart from risk. What is important to Jesus is HOW we risk so that our acts of obedience to Jesus’ call to go are not only honorable to the Lord, but constitute a spiritual act of worship as we steward well our time, resources, and lives. Why? Because the faithful practice of security is rooted firmly in biblical stewardship, and biblical stewardship is a form of worship that is just as pleasing to God as praising His name through song and prayer. This is why the faithful practice of kingdom security should empower Great Commission advance and not throttle that advance for the sake of safety.

## A Faithful Stewardship: Mitigating and Abating Predictable Tragedies

Predictable tragedies are consequences resulting from a failure to acknowledge and mitigate known threats and vulnerabilities. Suffering consequences that are predictable, especially consequences having nothing to do with the Gospel or persecution, is not faithfulness; it is spiritual negligence.

A biblical approach to stewarding risk begins where obedience meets calling and prepares for the consequences. This makes the practice of biblical security principles an act of godly stewardship. This includes protecting Christians from the consequences of blind faith and negligence. This is why the role of the Kingdom Security Professional is so incredibly important. The role of the Kingdom Security Professional has never been to remove risk from the equation of Great Commission obedience. Instead, the role of the Kingdom Security Professional is to remove uncertainty from the decision making process toward kingdom advance. Remember, Kingdom Security Professionals are more than sheepdogs, they are also watchmen and shepherds. As such, we must always be on the lookout for the naïve and the negligent and seek to help them onto a path of good stewardship that includes wisdom, prudence, and accountability. We do this so those who are called to go might build their personal effectiveness, thrive where the Lord has planted them, and collaborate together effectively to advance the kingdom of God to every corner of the Earth.

Having the ability to facilitate discussion regarding the difference between risk tolerance and risk capacity, to help both organization leaders and field workers understand the importance of practicing objective faith, and to take proactive steps to abate and mitigate “predictable tragedies” cannot be understated or dismissed. It is all crucially interrelated. Understanding objective faith helps individuals and organizations develop their risk tolerance. Developing the culture, processes, and structures of security-risk and crisis management helps individuals and organizations to increase their risk capacity, which includes their ability to respond proactively to critical incidents that will inevitably come. This makes the sacred work of the Kingdom Security Professional strategic to advancing the kingdom of God around the world—for God’s glory and our good!



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Far too many missionaries and their families have needlessly suffered “predictable tragedies.” Suffering consequences that are predictable, especially consequences having nothing to do with persecution or Gospel obedience, is to intentionally squander that which is most precious next to salvation itself: the gift of opportunity.

Scott Brawner

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