

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

Scott Brawner



**CONCILIUM**

## The Most Important Work of the Kingdom Security Professional

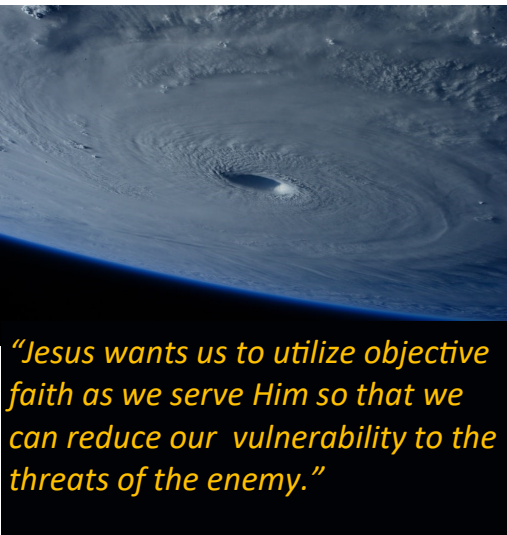
Here are three of the most important actions a Kingdom Security Professional can take to help gospel workers thrive on the mission field:

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.



### 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 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 tolerance 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. 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 and mission accomplishment.





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

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 abound when a Christian tries to apply the principles of saving faith to the practice of risk management in gospel obedience.

The objective faith of 1 Peter 4:10, as it applies to counting the cost of following Jesus, is an “eyes open” endeavor that sees Jesus warning 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 rightly points the man toward objective faith to help him 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 of vital importance to understand that, when it comes to Great Commission work, God neither asks for blind faith nor honors blind faith from His children. Sadly, this truth given by Jesus is often misunderstood as many missionaries—myself included—have practiced a measure of blind faith in mission endeavors. Thankfully in those cases 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. This is where the evil one shows himself, and tragedy can strike if we are not careful.

To put it another way, when Christians apply to 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 developing their risk decisions around errant philosophies justified by demonstrations of God’s grace that God never intended to be reproduceable. This can place the Christian in a dangerous position of trying to prove their faithfulness to God by taking risks and trusting Him to provide for their safety in ways that God clearly said He will NOT provide or honor.

What is the potential result? When God does not provide His grace the way the Christian expects based on their own flawed philosophies, 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. Satan eagerly seeks to capitalize on the emotional and spiritual distress these flawed philosophies blind faith can create. The evil one then looks 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. The enemy wraps them up in the pain and grief of self-induced moral injury. Satan can do this because the individual feels that God produced, or failed to prevent, an incident that contradicted their expectations of the Lord’s provision as errantly outlined in their own misguided theologies of risk and suffering. I have seen this many times over the



years, especially when associated with traumatic experiences or situations. This is most heartbreaking to me because this situation could well have been avoided with a prudent understanding of God’s word and the practice of objective faith rooted in the understanding risk tolerance and risk capacity.

When it comes to gauging risk, we have to understand that risk is found where vulnerability and threat collide. The vulnerability of God’s people is usually found in the obedience of God’s people to go to a world that is dangerous. Threats against God’s people come from the evil one using evil men to make war on the Saints. In this equation, Christians must remember the warning of 1 Peter 5:8, that their enemy is a “roaring lion



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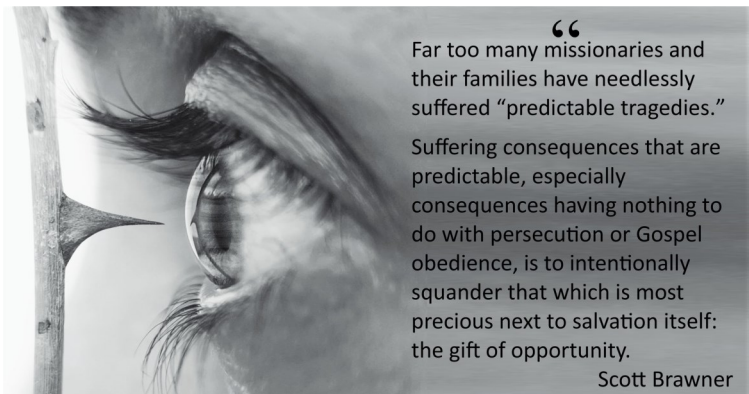
prowling around looking for those he can devour.” This is exactly why Jesus warns us to “be on our guard” as we are “shrewd as serpents yet gentle as doves” (Matthew 10:16). To fulfill Matthew 10:16 and mitigate 1 Peter 5:8, Jesus wants us to utilize objective faith in our obedience to Him. In that way, we can reduce our vulnerability to the threats that the enemy presents. By reducing our vulnerability to the threats of the enemy, we can INCREASE the extent of our obedience as we mitigate the risks 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 stewardship is a form of worship that is just as pleasing to God as praising His name through song and prayer!

## 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 and keeps Christians from the negative consequences of blind faith.



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 Great Commission obedience. Remember, the Kingdom Security Professional is more than a sheepdog; 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 wisdom, prudence, and stewardship. We do this so those who are called to go might build their effectiveness in Christ, thrive where the Lord has planted them, and press the kingdom of God forward to every corner of the Earth.

Having the ability to facilitate discussion regarding the difference between risk tolerance and risk capacity, to help both 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, as well as their ability to respond proactively to critical incidents. Friends, this work is strategic to advancing the kingdom of God around the world—for God’s glory, and for their good!

Scott Brawner is the President/CEO of Concilium, a global nonprofit ministry providing security-risk and crisis management services to missionaries and persecuted Christians around the world, and the Executive Director of the Risk Management Network, a network of security professionals serving in Great Commission organizations.

Scott is a theologically trained security professional who combines sound theological perspective with security best practices for Christian churches, mission agencies and humanitarian organizations.

Scott lives in the Midwest with his wife and three children.

