

Reflections from a Missions Pastor

Hendrik Saayman

When a Kingdom worker reports for duty to be obedient to the calling of the Lord, the last thing that a missions Pastor is thinking about is suffering, persecution, kidnapping or hostage victims. You are just glad that there are some people who are willing to take the Message to the ends of the earth that you do your best to help him or her to do just that.

The reality is unfortunately that the world is not so eager to receive this Message and neither the “enemy”. Therefore it is important to be prepared for difficult situations. We had to learn that the hard way. On two different occasions some of our workers experienced very challenging situations. One (single male) was kidnapped in a closed country and a family was trapped in a war zone in the Middle-East.

As a church we were not prepared for this and not sure how to handle it. By God’s grace, both of the parties came physically unharmed out of the situation but were emotionally wounded. We have learned precious lessons out of this and I would like to share these.

First of all, there must be a plan of action for workers who are going into a potentially hostile country. Such a plan must consist of at least the following points:

- Information about the nearest embassy or consulate of your country in or near the target country. The worker must report his or her presence in the country.
- Agreement/contract on who is responsible for decisions in time of crisis with

the agency whom your worker is going to work with.

- Communication strategy. This was one of the most important expectations from the workers. They need to be in contact with their church for moral support. This strategy depends on the context of the worker and may include provision for satellite phone if the other ways of communication like SKYPE, landline, cell phone, internet, etc. are unavailable.
- Evacuation strategy:
- It must be discussed with the worker how he or she will decide when is a good time to evacuate and what principles must be taken in consideration e.g. own safety, witness opportunity, fear etc.
- What means of evacuation are available
- Necessary funds for evacuation must be available.
- Information about trauma counselors in that country or the availability of trauma counselors ready on re-entry of the workers.

Above points must be cleared out in detail as good as possible before the worker leaves for the foreign country.

Secondly the church must create a “safety net” for the worker. Such a “safety net” can consist of the following:

- Prayer network. Make sure that enough people will intercede for the worker.
- Communication network. Information of the needs of the worker must be effectively communicated to the church.
- Moral support is very important in times of distress.
- Emergency funds must be available on short notice.
- In the event of re-entry there must be

logistical support such as accommodation, transport etc.

- Professional trauma counseling must start as soon as possible.
- The worker must feel that his or her well being is important to the church and not their performance.

Although persecution or martyrdom is something that you do not want for anyone, it is a reality and something that you find in the Bible from the very beginning! In Gen.4 we read of Able who was killed by his brother Cain because God accepted Able’s offering and not Cain’s. It is thus necessary for all of us as Christians to be prepared for persecution but more so for our workers because they are on the front line. As a church we must help them as well as we can to be prepared and to feel secure in the love, care and commitment from the church towards them. <<



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