

Security Briefs – Situational Awareness Series with Resources

Part 1 – Situational Awareness: Why It Matters

Introduction

Welcome to our new series on Situational Awareness—a foundational concept for missionaries working in cross-cultural contexts.

We talked a little about Situational Awareness in our last couple of series on Strategic Intercultural Relationships, now we are going to go a little deeper.

So, what exactly is it? Situational Awareness is the ability to perceive and understand what's happening around you so you can respond wisely. It's not just a security tool—it's a mindset rooted in Scripture and lived out daily.

In Matthew 10:16, Jesus tells His disciples, “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” That's situational awareness in a nutshell—wisdom, alertness, and grace, all working together.

Too often, workers fall into two traps. Some think, “I just trust God. I don't need to worry about security.” Others swing to the opposite extreme and live in constant anxiety, seeing danger in every shadow.

The goal is neither. Situational awareness isn't about paranoia—it's about posture.

The Posture of Awareness

Healthy awareness begins with humility. It says, “I don't control everything—but I am responsible for how I engage.” It's about tuning in rather than tuning out.

We all know the field worker who walks around his neighborhood with earbuds in and eyes on his phone. He never noticed the patterns around him- the rhythms of shopkeepers opening, the kids on the corner watching, the vehicle that passes twice. When an incident does occur — like a confrontation outside his gate — he will be completely unprepared.

On the other hand, think instead about someone who practices “soft focus.” She walks with a gentle scan of her surroundings, knows her neighbors by name, and picks up when something feels off. Her posture makes her approachable—and gives her warning when tensions begin to rise.

When your body language communicates calm, respect, and attention, others are more likely to treat you with the same.

This posture lays the foundation for the next two areas we'll cover in future episodes: being informed and being observant.

Now you know.

In our next episode, we'll talk about being informed and observant. In the meantime, download the transcript and check out some of the resources that go along with this episode.

Resources

- Be Wise as Serpents (Article): <https://www.gotquestions.org/wise-serpents-harmless-doves.html>
- Situational Awareness Reboot (Missio Nexus Article). You have a subscription to Missio Nexus if you serve with the Assemblies of God or any other sponsoring organization. Check with your leadership about how to activate it: <https://missionexus.org/situational-awareness-reboot/>
- The Art of Being a Gray Man. Please note, we don't recommend all of the propositions outlined in this article, but it is a helpful summary of Situational Awareness and being "gray": <https://optiongray.com/the-art-of-being-a-gray-man-disguise-and-deception/>