

# Security Briefs: Secure Connections – Episode 048

## Part 4: Social Media — The Hidden Security Gap

### Introduction

Today on Security Briefs, we continue our Secure Connections series. Remember to share this with supporters and workers alike.

So far, we have talked about stewardship in communication, how context shapes updates, and how to share stories without creating risk. Today, we are going to address something that often creates exposure without anyone intending it.

Social media.

Most security breaches in missions today are not dramatic. They are not the result of espionage or investigation. They are the result of casual posting.

- A tagged photo.
- A live video.
- A location pin.
- A well-meaning supporter comment.

These are small actions with a wide reach.

So today, we are going to talk about the hidden security gap that social media can create — and how both missionaries and supporters can close it.

### The Missionary Side

First, to our missionary friends. Even if you personally are careful online, others may not be. Social media introduces three primary risks:

- First, **location exposure** — tagging cities, landmarks, or using automatic geolocation.
- Second, **timeline exposure** — posting in real time during sensitive meetings or travel.
- Third, **network exposure** — photos that identify local believers or show consistent gathering patterns.

In open environments, these may not pose immediate threats. In sensitive or restricted contexts, they can create patterns that others observe.

Here are some practical guardrails:

- Consider turning off automatic location tagging.
- Delay posting sensitive content.
- Avoid posting photos of locals without permission — and in some contexts, avoid it entirely.

- Regularly review your privacy settings.
- And perhaps most importantly, assume that anything posted can be copied, shared, or archived. Because it can. Once it leaves your device, you no longer control it.

Here is a test you can easily run. Go to any search engine like Google or Bing or any AI agent like ChatGPT or Gemini. Ask in plain English what it can find out about your work as a missionary. You may be surprised to see what is out there. And once it is out there, there is no taking it back. The best way to clean up your profile is to never post things you don't want seen by everyone in the first place.

Social media is not private communication. It is public publication. Use it wisely.

### The Supporter Side

Now, to our supporters and churches. You may think, "I'm not the one on the field. How could I create risk?" But supporters can unintentionally expose as much — or more — than missionaries. Some common risky actions on social media are:

- Tagging a missionary in a post about a specific country.
- Commenting publicly, "So excited about your church planting work in \_\_\_\_!"
- Sharing screenshots of prayer letters.
- Posting travel plans before they are completed.

These actions may feel encouraging. But they may also draw unwanted attention.

**Here is a simple rule:** If a missionary does not post it publicly themselves, do not post it for them. And even if they do post something, consider whether reposting amplifies it beyond its intended audience.

Your encouragement matters deeply. Just make sure it protects rather than exposes.

### The Shared Principle

Proverbs tells us that "the prudent see danger and take refuge." Wisdom often looks like restraint. Social media is a powerful tool. It can connect, encourage, and mobilize prayer. But it must be governed by discernment.

Secure connection does not mean silence. It means intention.

When missionaries and supporters treat social media as stewardship rather than self-expression, protection increases. And protection strengthens longevity.

### Practical Takeaways

So here are today's practical takeaways. **Missionaries:** Review your social media settings this week. Turn off automatic location services and evaluate what you post in real time.

**Supporters:** Make it a practice to never tag, geo-label, or publicly reference a missionary's location or ministry unless you have explicit permission.

Small habits prevent large problems. Secure connection includes digital wisdom.

Now you know.

We'll see you next time as we continue to talk about Secure Connections.