

NOVEMBER
2018

resource
of the month

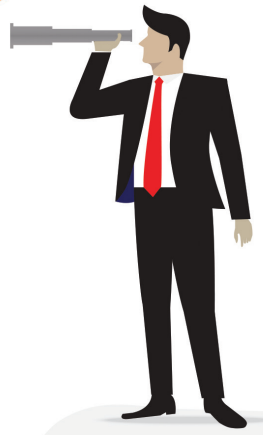
Sunday Morning: WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR?



MAXIMUM MINISTRY.
MINIMUM LIABILITY.



“
IF YOU KNEW WHAT I KNOW ABOUT
TERRORISM, YOU'D NEVER LEAVE
YOUR HOUSE. **GEN. JOHN KELLY**
”



In the spring of 2017, a suicide bomber killed himself and twenty-two other people in Manchester, England. The incident ignited the usual media discussions about terrorism and how safe we in America really are, dominating the airwaves for several days.

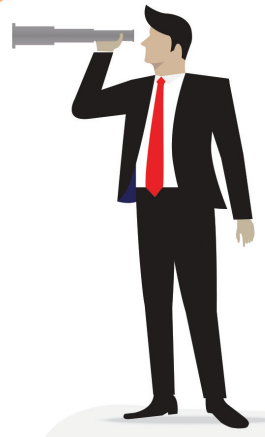
Gen. John Kelly, President Donald Trump's chief of staff, appeared on a morning show on one of the national television networks. During his interview, he praised the men and women who combat terrorism and keep Americans safe every day, but he also made this statement: "If you knew what I know about terrorism, you'd never leave your house."

Maybe he's right. But Americans, and especially God's people, must not live paralyzed by fear. There will always be evil in the world, and Christians understand this better than most. They have to go on living their lives—trusting God and acting wisely.

A church member who observes his congregation on Sunday morning will typically see people from all walks of life gathering for worship. Congregants generally fall into one of three categories:

- **People who are there to worship God and encourage one another**
- **People who are seeking help**
- **People who are wolves in sheep's clothing**

A CHURCH MEMBER WHO STANDS OUTSIDE THE FRONT DOOR OF THE SANCTUARY ON A TYPICAL SUNDAY MORNING WILL SEE PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE.



The Bible says in Neh. 4:15, ***“And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.”***

God’s people had returned to Jerusalem and were building the wall, but they faced opposition. Their enemies thought they would sneak in and cause major trouble, but when they discovered that the people were ready for them, their plans failed.

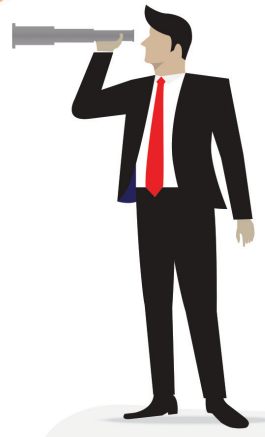
That is the kind of preparation needed in churches today. Church leaders must have situational awareness and be prepared to protect their congregations from those who would seek to bring them harm.

One of the courses the U.S. Marine Corps uses to instruct its troops is titled “Profiling and Tactical Tracking.” Most people see the word *profiling* and immediately think negatively because of how it is used in the media and elsewhere, usually in a racial context. But profiling is not necessarily a bad thing. People do it every day.

When a teenage boy knocks on a girl’s door and encounters her father who has never seen him before, the father begins profiling him from the moment he sees him. It is what any protective parent would do.

People are vigilant when it comes to their loved ones. Churches today need to be just as vigilant when it comes to the safety of their congregations. That means identifying every person who comes through the doors according to the aforementioned categories and dealing with the latter two prayerfully and efficiently.

THOSE WHO LOOK TO ATTACK THE HOUSE OF THE LORD WILL CHECK IT OUT IN ADVANCE AND SIZE IT UP TO SEE WHAT KIND OF READINESS MIGHT EXIST.



Threat profiling, as defined by the U.S. Marine Corps, is a combination of time-tested, current-trend profiling and behavior analysis. It is a method of proactively identifying possible threats through human behavior pattern analysis and recognition. Though it sounds complicated, the actual methodology is not, and much of it is based on common-sense principles most people already recognize. No matter the threat, there will be certain characteristics that can be observed and measured.

A man is seen sitting down with his head in his hands, massaging around his eyes with his thumbs. What is the observer's conclusion? He is probably stressed about something.

Someone makes hand motions to and from the head—a typical sign of anger—almost as if he is trying to pull the anger out of his head.

These are examples of basic behavioral cues people give that let others know something is not right. Maybe they are no danger at all; maybe they are just looking for help and hoping to find it at church. But safety team members must be aware of the surroundings and who is there.

Failure to pay attention to what is going on can lead to tragedy. People celebrating Bastille Day in the French city of Nice in 2016 were basking in the party atmosphere after an evening of fireworks, walking back to their cars, when they heard screaming. Some of them ignored the sound because everything had been so loud all evening. By the time they realized something was wrong, a man driving a cargo truck was right on top of them, mowing them down on the sidewalk. A total of eighty-seven people lost their lives that night.

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Some of them were having the vacation of a lifetime only to see it turn deadly in a moment.

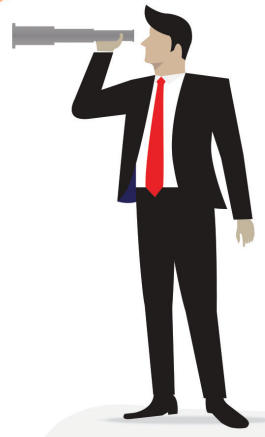
Attackers are always looking for targets of opportunity—what are often called “soft targets.” They look for places with maximum payoff for the terror they wish to incite. In the case of a church, they might do surveillance work or even a trial run before an actual attack. Some churches have captured such an exercise on their own surveillance video and have contacted law enforcement to report it.

When a gunman killed twenty-six people on a Sunday morning at a church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, it was not the first time he had been on the property. He had shown up the previous Wednesday and was dressed in black tactical gear. Survivors of the Sunday shooting now believe that he was there the first time to scope out the church.

Four people were shot in June of 2017 at a ballpark in Alexandria, Virginia, where Republican members of Congress were practicing for their annual charity baseball game. The investigation revealed that the gunman sat in the parking lot waiting because he knew who would be there. When he got out of his van he asked someone, “Is this where the Republicans are?” That person replied in the affirmative without thinking anything was amiss. The fact that no one was killed except the shooter is due primarily to the fact that members of the Capitol Police were in the ballpark when the shooting occurred. They were prepared.

Analysis of the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando in 2016 reveals that the gunman had visited the club multiple times before the night he attacked and killed forty-nine people. He knew when customers inside would be the most distracted—during last call, with music blaring—just before club management called it a night and closed the doors. He knew no one would notice him until it was too late.

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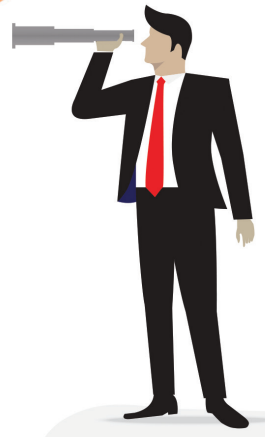
What can be learned from all these incidents? Church leaders need to notice who comes and goes in their facilities and why they are there. If a person visits a Sunday service but seems distant—doesn't want to participate or learn anything about the ministry—someone needs to approach the person and engage him in conversation. Safety team members should seek to establish a baseline with persons like this.

A security consultant who examines a church campus will look at several different aspects. He will notice the parking situation, for example, and how people come and go. Some churches have separate parking for visitors and try to direct first-timers to that location. This means they will gravitate to a particular entrance. While dedicated parking for visitors is a courtesy meant to show people that they are loved and that their attendance is appreciated, it also gives the safety team a great opportunity to observe people coming to the church for the first time.

One church in particular has a policy of engaging visitors three times before they come into a service. When they drive into the parking lot, an attendant leans into the driver's side window and asks, "Is this your first time visiting us?" If the answer is yes, they are directed to the visitor parking area.

As they get out of the car, someone is there to say, "Hello. Do you have any questions?" A separate greeter meets them at the door to ask if he or she can direct them to a particular area such as the nursery or a Sunday school class.

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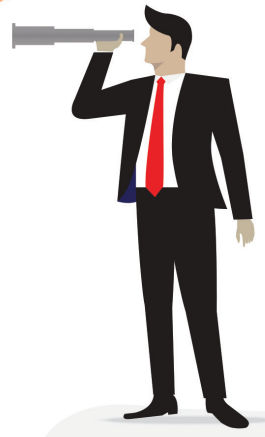
The parking area is arranged so that most of the members of the church come into the building from another side so the safety team knows that most of those entering from this side are visitors. That is a simple way to establish a baseline.

Another baseline involves the dress code. Many churches today have a “come as you are” policy regarding dress. Other churches are more formal. A security consultant recounted an instance where he visited a church wearing khakis and a casual shirt while most of the members were in a coat and tie or a dress. A greeter at the door told him immediately that the balcony was open and he could sit there, not knowing that the man was there in an official capacity to make a safety presentation.

The consultant moved freely around the church all morning. He sat down front for a while, and no one spoke to him. Immediately after the service he walked right up next to the pastor and lingered for a few moments. Later, during his presentation, he demonstrated how many handguns he was able to carry into the building without being noticed. The pastor watched the presentation in stunned silence.

The bottom line is that if someone comes into your church acting like he knows his way around the buildings but no one in the church knows him, that person is someone to keep an eye on. He is an anomaly—a deviation from the baseline—someone who likely should not be there.

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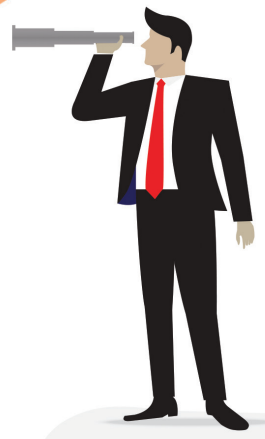
Everyone has a baseline—how they normally act and react. Nearly every church has an elderly man or woman who is always in the same spot and who greets friends with a hug upon arrival. When he or she is not there on a given Sunday, people wonder why. An experienced safety team leader will walk around the building looking for things that are out of place and people who may be out of sorts. It is all about looking for that deviation, that one thing that is out of place.

Every person has a preconceived mindset, like a file folder that contains specific information. Sometimes the information changes over time. For example, in the 1970s, a person with a tattoo was assumed to have been at some point in the military, with a motorcycle gang, or in prison. Today that is not the case, as many people from all walks of life have embraced that particular style of body art. People's mindsets have changed.

But if a person comes to church and seems out of place, it is a good idea to find out why. After observing and assessing any anomalies, the safety team member must decide how to react. If someone is loud and disruptive in the service or goes into the children's ministry section with no apparent reason, then there is no time for analysis. Action must be immediate.

Some anomalies may need a second opinion. A man came into a church building one Sunday wearing bib overall shorts and wading boots, after which a safety team member quickly asked the team leader to take a look. He noticed the man with his back against a pillar in the lobby, which he identified as a defensive position where no one could get behind him. One of the pastors spoke to him and learned that he was visiting his sister, after which he would go straight to work on a concrete

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job. There was no threat, just an odd wardrobe choice for church. The safety team responded thoughtfully and correctly.

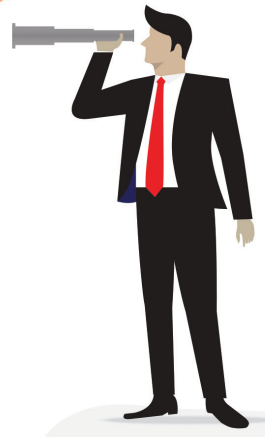
Notice that the first person to speak to this man was not a safety team member but a pastor. The safety team should not be the first contact with a visitor unless a threat has been identified.

Suppose a man comes into the Sunday morning service disheveled and smelling of alcohol. He is sitting in the sanctuary by himself when he is approached by a safety team member. This visitor is not armed and has done nothing to suggest an immediate threat. He just needs help; maybe he lost his job on Friday and things are not going well at home so he slept in his car all weekend and had too much to drink. He sees the safety team member's earpiece and thinks, "I just got here and they put one of their watchdogs on me." Not a good first impression.

On the other hand, if the visitor does not identify the safety team member and just thinks he is a friendly church member, the visitor may open up and start talking about his problems. Once a person starts talking in that situation, he usually does not stop until he tells everything. Once that happens, the safety team member is out of position, and if he gets a call and has to walk away abruptly, there is little hope the visitor will open up to anyone else.

If an anomaly is spotted but does not appear to be an obvious threat, the best action is for a safety team member to stand by and listen as a minister talks to the visitor. If the minister indicates that he has control, the safety team member can move away while still keeping an eye on the situation.

A THREAT MUST BE DEALT WITH IMMEDIATELY. IF SOMEONE IS LOUD AND DISRUPTIVE IN THE SERVICE OR GOES INTO THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY SECTION WHEN HE IS NOT SUPPOSED TO, ACTION MUST BE IMMEDIATE.



Often a single anomaly about a person does not constitute an actual threat, but if multiple anomalies are identified, a member of the pastoral staff should be notified and the safety team should keep the subject under surveillance.

Sometimes a visitor will hide in plain sight and test church members to see how they react. A young man showed up at church on Easter with a shirt that had obvious inappropriate writing on the front and back. All who saw it would have been concerned about his intentions. The man was asked to turn the shirt inside out or put it in his car. He professed ignorance but was wearing other things that suggested he knew exactly what he was doing.

A woman walked into church one Sunday and one of the members who is a paramedic immediately went to a safety team member. "That woman has been beaten up by her husband," he said.

"How can you tell?"

"Watch her arms."

She wore a sundress, and some marks were visible on her upper chest; but when she raised her arms, it was obvious that someone had grabbed her hard enough to bruise her. It was a cry for help—most domestic violence victims try to cover up these kinds of marks.

When men approached the couple, the husband grabbed her and did all the talking. He was not going to let her say anything. The safety team made a note of this in case the couple came back, but they never did.

AN EXPERIENCED SAFETY TEAM LEADER WILL WALK AROUND THE BUILDING LOOKING FOR THINGS THAT ARE OUT OF PLACE AND PEOPLE WHO MAY BE OUT OF SORTS.



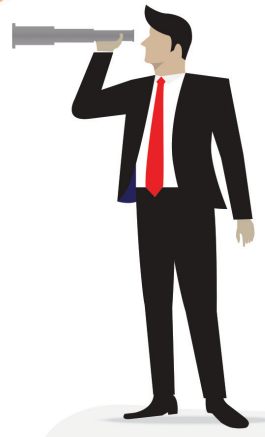
In another church, a safety team member saw a man taking photographs of a little girl and asked if he knew the child's family. "Oh, yes," the man said. "They're good friends of mine."

The man then started for the door. The safety team member saw the parents and asked if they knew the man; they said they had never seen him before. The safety team moved quickly toward the parking lot, took the phone from the man, and deleted the photos.

In situations like this, especially involving potential threats to children, the safety team should become the paparazzi—taking multiple photos of the perpetrator, following him to his car, getting a photo of his license plate, and contacting local law enforcement. An Android phone has a feature that allows the user to shake it and turn on the camera instantly. Safety team members should be taught to turn on the video recorder and place the phone in the front lapel pocket, so it records a conversation with the subject without his or her knowledge. (Note that the laws vary from state to state when it comes to recording someone without his or her consent. Church leaders should be certain they know what is legal in their jurisdiction.)

Engaging a visitor and asking a few simple questions can accomplish much. If a visitor comes in alone and immediately asks for directions to the balcony, that is a red flag. Someone should ask him why he wants to go there. If he says he is meeting his girlfriend, he may be doing exactly that. If his responses make the questioner uneasy, a call for help is in order.

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A great deal can be inferred from proxemics, which is how people react according to their proximity to others. This can be subconscious. For instance, a person can walk into a room and often tell whether a man and a woman are in a relationship or if two people are family members by how they sit next to each other.

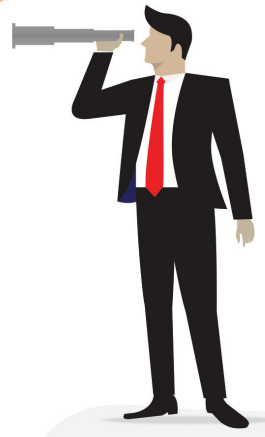
This is important because of what is known as a **“proxemic push”**—when a person becomes uncomfortable and backs away or pushes back from someone else. It’s the same reaction someone might make when encountering a snake in the yard or when driving through a bad neighborhood and instinctively speeding up to get out of there. In contrast, a **“proxemic pull”** happens when someone reaches out to shake a friend’s hand and that person moves forward to reciprocate.

These signals can say much. If a man approaches a woman and she pushes away, it might just be bad breath. If the same thing happens with more than one woman, it is likely that the man’s conversation makes them uncomfortable and he needs to be watched.

If a pastor is talking to someone and takes a step back, it could be because he is listening intently to what is being said. But if he moves defensively, it will tell those nearby that something is not right. This can be noticed even by someone not standing right next to him. It is every human’s natural instinct to move away from a threat.

On the other hand, a visitor may act in such a way as to draw a person in closer, and this is not always good. A person who starts lowering his head and speaking more softly is trying to pull someone in, and an unsuspecting listener who gets too close could be hit.

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It is always better to observe a potential threat at a distance, taking a step back and saying, “I’m sorry but I can’t hear you. Can you speak up?” An unfamiliar person should be compelled to make eye contact during a conversation; if he does not want to look up, something is typically not right.

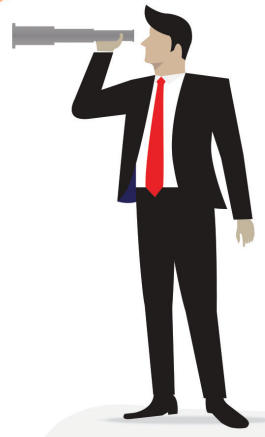
Atmospherics can also be very telling. If children are making noise at home while a parent tries to read the newspaper and suddenly it gets quiet, what does a parent do? He or she tries to find out what the kids are up to or if one of them got hurt. A sudden change in noise altered the atmospherics.

In any location, if it goes from noisy to quiet in a few seconds, there is a reason. Individuals can do this during a conversation. Why did that person get quiet all of a sudden while someone was talking to him?

Atmospherics change in a church service when a person interrupts the pastor as he is preaching. Often a disruptive person can be taken out of the situation by a safety team member asking him to go outside and talk. An attempt to handle the situation right there in the sanctuary can cause the entire audience to become disengaged. But the individual should not just be yanked out, as that may cause quite a scene, especially if the subject has mental health challenges.

Safety team members should be trained how to identify persons with obvious mental challenges as well as persons who may be using narcotics. For example, if the color of a person’s pupils cannot be detected, that person likely is on narcotics. Someone who is bouncing

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off the walls one week and sitting perfectly still the next is likely on some type of medication. Talking a mile a minute but taking a long time to answer a simple question usually indicates the presence of a mood-enhancing drug.

Of course, much can be learned just by having a conversation. When talking to a person who seems out of place, it is important to repeat what he says and show interest in what he is saying—respect without judgment.

A good starting point is to ask him if he is a first-time visitor. This is especially relevant if the church has multiple services.

“What brought you here? Your best friend is a member? What is his name? Have you been going to another church? Which one?”

These are simple questions, but someone attempting to be deceptive will be evasive when answering. Those answers can help determine if there is a threat.

Occasionally someone will come to church solely to cause trouble. But many of the people who walk through the doors each week, especially the ones who are not recognized or have not been seen before, are there because they are hurting and looking for help. A safety team member may recall having been in the same situation many years ago when it led him or her to seek a church home. What may look like a tense situation at first can turn into an opportunity to minister to someone in need.

Utilizing the tools mentioned here can help a church safety team observe and respond in a way that keeps everyone safe while giving maximum opportunity to minister to those who are hurting.