



# Start the Conversation

Guided Reflection on Care, Preparedness, and Faithful Responsibility

## Purpose of This Document

Many faith-based organizations care deeply about the spiritual, emotional, and mental well-being of those they serve. Yet conversations about preparedness, counseling systems, and response protocols can feel uncomfortable, unclear, or overwhelming.

This document is designed to help leaders, staff, parents, and ministry partners start thoughtful, respectful conversations within their church or faith-based organization. The goal is not criticism or compliance, but clarity, collaboration, and care.

Scripture reminds us:

*“Without consultation, plans are frustrated,  
But with many counselors they succeed.” (Proverbs 15:22)*

## How to Use This Guide

- Use these questions in leadership meetings, committee discussions, or personal reflection.
- Answer honestly based on current practice, not intent or hope.
- It is acceptable and expected for different areas to fall at different levels.
- The rating scale is meant to prompt dialogue, not assign blame.

## Preparedness Rating Scale

For each section, consider which description best reflects your organization today:

- **Not prepared at all**  
Little to no formal guidance, training, or clarity exists.
- **Somewhat prepared**  
Informal practices or partial systems exist, but gaps remain.
- **Highly prepared**  
Clear procedures, training, and leadership alignment are in place and practiced.

## Section 1: Organizational Readiness and Culture

### Conversation Questions

- Do we have shared language around care, safety, and responsibility when individuals are struggling emotionally or psychologically?
- Are leaders and staff clear on their roles when concerns arise?
- Do people feel safe bringing forward difficult information without fear of shame, blame, or spiritual dismissal?
- How do we balance faith, prayer, and pastoral care with appropriate professional boundaries?

### Reflection Prompt

How does our organizational culture reflect Christ's call to shepherd, protect, and serve the vulnerable?

### Preparedness Rating:

- Not prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Highly prepared

## Section 2: Response to Traumatic or Critical Incidents

### Conversation Questions

- If a traumatic event occurred tomorrow, would we know who leads the response?
- Do we have a clear plan for communication, care, and follow-up?
- Are leaders trained to respond calmly and appropriately under pressure?
- Do we know when and how to involve outside professionals?

### Reflection Prompt

Scripture calls us to "...weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). How prepared are we to do that well, without causing additional harm?

### Preparedness Rating:

- Not prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Highly prepared



## Section 3: Suicidal Ideation and Self-Harm Awareness

### Conversation Questions

- Do our leaders know how to recognize warning signs of suicidal ideation or self-harm?
- Are there clear steps for what to do and who to contact if concerns arise?
- Have we addressed common misconceptions that faith alone prevents mental health crises?
- Are we equipped to respond with compassion rather than fear or avoidance?

### Reflection Prompt

How do we honor the sacredness of life while responding wisely to real and complex suffering?

### Preparedness Rating:

- Not prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Highly prepared

## Section 4: Mandatory Reporting and Legal Responsibilities

### Conversation Questions

- Do leaders understand their legal and ethical responsibilities related to abuse, neglect, or threats of harm?
- Are reporting procedures clearly documented and accessible?
- Do staff and volunteers know what information must be reported and what should not be handled internally?
- Are these responsibilities taught proactively rather than reactively?

### Reflection Prompt

How do we steward authority responsibly while protecting those entrusted to our care?

### Preparedness Rating:

- Not prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Highly prepared



## Section 5: Threat Assessment and Safety Planning

### Conversation Questions

- Do we have a process for identifying and addressing concerning behaviors before they escalate?
- Are concerns taken seriously, even when they are uncomfortable or ambiguous?
- Is there a clear pathway for documentation, consultation, and decision-making?
- Do we collaborate across roles rather than isolating responsibility to one person?

### Reflection Prompt

What does faithful vigilance look like in our specific ministry context?

### Preparedness Rating:

- Not prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Highly prepared

## Section 6: Counseling and Care Infrastructure

### Conversation Questions

- Do we have a defined counseling philosophy that integrates faith, wisdom, and professional standards?
- Are lay counselors properly trained and supported?
- Do we know when internal care is appropriate and when referral is necessary?
- Do we have a clearly understood pathway that allows individuals to move between individual counseling, group care, referral, and follow-up without confusion or loss of continuity?

### Reflection Prompt

How do we ensure that care offered in Christ's name reflects excellence, humility, and integrity?

### Preparedness Rating:

- Not prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Highly prepared



## Section 7: Training, Growth, and Ongoing Development

### Conversation Questions

- When was the last time leaders or staff received relevant training in these areas?
- Do we view preparedness as a one-time task or an ongoing responsibility?
- Are new leaders and volunteers oriented consistently?
- Is there space for learning, questions, and improvement without defensiveness?

### Reflection Prompt

How can ongoing training be framed as discipleship rather than obligation?

### Preparedness Rating:

- Not prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Highly prepared

### Closing Reflection: Moving Forward Together

This guide is not meant to produce quick answers, but faithful conversations.

Preparedness does not mean perfection. It means humility, responsibility, and a willingness to seek counsel. Many organizations discover that their next step is not immediate change, but deeper understanding.

Consider closing your conversation by asking:

- What is one area where clarity would reduce fear or confusion?
- What is one area where collaboration would strengthen care?
- What is one step we can take, prayerfully and wisely, toward better stewardship?

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*“Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”*  
*(Galatians 6:2)*

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