

The Unashamed Deacon

It doesn't take a genius to realize that we live in a time when society is trying its dead-level best to mute the voices of believers. With even greater frequency, we experience a fear of walking boldly with Christ. And what does walking boldly actually mean? Does it mean a fish decal on our car? A hot take on social media? Winning a debate at the watercooler? No. Walking boldly with Christ cuts much deeper than these common applications and surfacy caricatures. When you became a Christ-follower, you were explicitly called to walk boldly with Christ and live a life of bold, courageous, and sometimes dangerous service. You are one person in a long line of Christians, beginning with Stephen who, amidst the onslaught of hurled stones, stood unashamed. It's a counter-cultural undertaking. It's revolutionary. How do you know you're standing unashamed? Here are five ways:

To stand when others are falling.

We all know how hard it is to stand consistently and how easy it is to fall. I've come to realize after 58 years on this earth that I could wreck my life in less than 15 minutes. My flesh is a formidable opponent! The Apostle Paul reminds us, "to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand." We stand for truth in an age of temptation, rage, selfishness, and ungodliness. Dudley Tyng stood in a day when slavery was practiced in the 1830s. He stood boldly against it. He said, *"I would rather that this right arm were amputated at the trunk than that I should come short of my duty to you in delivering God's message."* Before he died, he was asked if he had a message for the ministers he knew. It was simple: Let us all stand up for Jesus.

To love the ones no one else is loving.

Christians are God's safeguard for the neglected. Those first

deacons were commissioned to restore the safety, provision, and dignity of Greek widows. These widows were being neglected in food distribution. The gaps of language and social status among these women became a point of reckoning for the early church. As deacons, this is our inflection point of purpose. We are called to love and care for those who may be neglected. This requires attentiveness and presence of mind. Deacons must be self-starters when it comes to compassion.

To speak when no one else is speaking.

The unashamed leader is called to speak with boldness when others cower. This is difficult for many deacons because we are called to serve. How can someone serve by speaking boldly? Sometimes serving means that we speak words that someone needs to hear rather than something someone wants to hear. How often have we been hesitant to speak the words that would save the hearer from eternal damnation? We have the opportunity to speak bold words that save!

To give when everyone else is hoarding.

Walking boldly requires us to give boldly. We place all of our assets under the lordship of Christ. At the end of our lives, we will be more grateful for the things that we gave away than the things we kept to ourselves. Generosity is countercultural in an era of excess and accumulation. It requires a bold focus on stewarding our resources in such a way that we have a capacity for boldness in giving. Interestingly, giving is contagious. When you give daringly, you embolden others to do likewise. They'll see you have skin in the game, and they'll want in on the action. Our boldness in giving is accompanied by a promise: *"Test me in this way," says the Lord of Armies. "See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure."* (Malachi 3:10b CSB)

To believe when everyone seems to be doubting.

An unashamed deacon walks in faith and imbues an optimism for

the mission he endeavors to achieve. Like Caleb and Joshua looking over the heads of the giants to see the amazing vineyards of the promised land, we can walk joyfully into the challenges before us. The outcome of our mission is in His hand, so let's believe and not doubt.

Let us stand, love, believe, give, and speak with great boldness. With these guiding principles, we can step into a much larger and grander story. Others will follow our lead and we'll discover we are not alone. We learn the truth in King David's words that *"when we trust in you, we will not be ashamed."* Psalm 22:5