

## **Men Who Stand in the Gap**

### **Ezekiel 22:23-31**

### **A Morning Like No Other**

This morning is unlike any other morning for me.

Most Sundays, I stand here to preach the Word of God to our church family. But today, I'm standing here as a son — and I get to speak about my Dad who is being ordained a Deacon for this church today.

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### **The Man I've Seen**

I've seen this man in ways none of you have. I've seen him at the dinner table. I've seen him upset because my little sister slammed my little brother's head into a bowl of soup. And then I saw him laughing because he couldn't help it.

I've seen him in bad times and good times. I've seen him trying to figure out how he was going to pay for everything for our family. I've seen him go to work when he was tired (too many times to count), still show up to church when he didn't feel good (too many times to count), and help people when no one else knew.

I've seen him stand for what's right when it cost him friends. I've seen so-called friend turn their back on him. I've seen him keep his word when it wasn't easy. I've seen him love my mom, my sisters, and my brother—and all the grandchildren.

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### **A Family That Stands Together**

Can my Mom please stand up? My Dad couldn't have done anything without her. She is a great mother and a great woman who cares greatly for everyone she comes into contact with.

Can our entire family please stand up? Thank you all for being here. This is a testimony to our Dad. We all love him greatly because he's done good for all of us in our lives.

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## Biblical Praise

I've seen him raise his family. I was there. And now he loves this church family here. My sisters, brother, and myself were not easy on him growing up. We gave him some trouble. And many of you in this church aren't easy on him. You give him some trouble at times. But he's still here. Thank God. And we give all honor and glory to God for giving us my Dad, our Dad, here in this life.

### ""Proverbs 27:2

Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.""

I am that other man today. My Dad set the example for me in my life. And he set a great example. Was he perfect? No he wasn't perfect. I wasn't either. You weren't either. We all make mistakes. But he got back up and got back on the right path. And he's sticking to the right path.

### ""Romans 13:7

Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.""

Today, honor is due.

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## God's Choice for West Louisville

Gary Tapp, my Dad, is going to be ordained a deacon for this church here in West Louisville. This is a tough area as all of you know who are here right now. And God chose my Dad to be right here with us. I know why. Because he can do it. And he has been doing it.

This is not just my Dad and your Dad. This is a man God has called to serve His church in a greater way. Today, we set him apart as a deacon—not because of his last name, but because of his life and what he's chosen to do with his life.

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Many of you don't know where he's been in his life. I do. He's milked cows. He's cut hay fields. He's combined corn fields. He's cut tobacco. He's dug post holes. He's built many fences. He's built homes. He's raised children. He's been a husband for over 50 years. He's been faithful to church his entire life.

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He's ran a feed store. He's delivered feed. He's carried 200 pounds on his shoulder all day long—I watched him do it. I watched him limp through it and he still kept going. He's still going today.

He works out on a farm each day. He's worked on tractors. He's raised cattle. He's still raising them.

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He's owned and ran an electrical store, Electric City, that's still going for 37 years. This has provided jobs for many people. My brother runs that today. And they have donated and helped us greatly here at this church. I thank God for them right now. May God bless them all greatly.

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Dad has been a Kentucky State Representative and Kentucky State Senator. Many of you didn't know that. He once almost ran for Governor of the state. He would have had a good shot to win that. He's helped many, many people over his lifetime.

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There's been people who have loved him greatly and there's been people who have hated him greatly. The ones who have hated him are the haters of God. The casino and gambling industry hated my Dad. They are wicked people who prey on the poor and lost. The homosexual community hated my Dad and my family. He's been called every name you can think of because he stood for what was right. But he kept fighting for good. And we will too.

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Hey, listen, he set the example for us. He's worked extremely hard his entire life. And he's a great leader within this church.

## **A Call To Every Man Here**

And what I want to preach this morning is not just for him—it's for every man in this room. My Dad made the choice to be here. He didn't have to be here. You get this same choice. We need men here who are going to do the same thing.

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If there's any place around that needs you men here right now, it's here in this location. It's not easy. It's a great challenge in every way you can imagine. And God placed us here, and you're hearing this today because you get this same choice to make a **REAL DIFFERENCE** in this world today. We give up many things to do this work.

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The same God, the ONLY GOD, who is calling my Dad to stand in the gap is calling you to stand there too. The title of this sermon is Men Who Stand in the Gap.

## In Ezekiel Chapter 22, This Happens

**God tells Ezekiel** that the land of Israel is defiled—like a wilderness stripped bare after rain—because of the sin of its leaders and people.

- **Prophets** have conspired, twisting the truth and devouring lives for gain (v. 25, 28).
- **Priests** have ignored God's law, profaned holy things, blurred the difference between clean and unclean, and dishonored the Sabbath (v. 26).
- **Princes** (leaders/rulers) are violent, shedding blood, and destroying people for profit (v. 27).
- **The people of the land** are oppressing the poor, mistreating strangers, and robbing others (v. 29).
- **This is all very similar to what's happening today.**

God says He searched for **one man** to stand in the gap — to rebuild the hedge, to intercede, to protect the land from judgment — but found none (v. 30). Because no one would stand, **His wrath would be poured out**, and He would repay them according to their deeds (v. 31).

### ""Ezekiel 22:30

And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.""

Today we have a man that is going to stand in that gap. And imagine this: This area is in great trouble. But we've been here since late last year. My Dad has been out there in the streets working hard with many of us that are here right now.

As of the end of July in 2025, there have been 53 homicides in Louisville. For the same period last year when we weren't here, there were 83 homicides. That's a decrease of 36%. June 2025 saw the fewest homicides in that month since 2014.

And you can say it's because of this or that. Since we opened this church on October 13, 2024 there have been 1012 people out soul winning on these streets and 967 people heard the Gospel and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. 48 people have been baptized here. Look, this is making a difference.

And let's say we chose not to be here. Let's say all of you from this area chose not to be with us and chose not to do this work that you've been doing. The murders wouldn't be down. And God would pour out his wrath here. But we've decided to do the work here and to bring the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to this area. Jesus wins.

The evil is not going to win. The murders are going to continue to decrease. The liquor stores are going to go out of business. The drug dealers are going to leave. People get dropped off here in

West Louisville, and we catch them out there on the streets and we give them the Gospel. We've ran into many that just got dropped off. And they're in trouble. And they listen. And we stand in that GAP. Look at the verse again.

"And I sought for A MAN among them, that should make up the hedge, and STAND IN THE GAP before me for the land, that I should not DESTROY IT: but I found none."

For all the men and women in here right now, you get this same choice that my Dad made. You can stand in the gap so this place isn't destroyed for you, your family, and the future generations OR you can let it all go and do what you want with your life versus what God wants. My Dad made the right decision. The others in here right now that work with us each week made the right decision.

## **The Qualifications of Gap-Standers**

A deacon must meet the Biblical qualifications. Today, Dad is becoming a deacon.

### **""1 Timothy 3:8-10**

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; 9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.""

- **Grave** – takes the work of God seriously.
- **Not doubletongued** – speaks truth consistently.
- **Disciplined** – not controlled by appetites.
- **Not greedy** – not in it for gain.
- **Holding the faith** – grounded in sound doctrine.
- **Proven** – has already been tested in faithfulness.

### **""1 Timothy 3:11-13**

Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. 12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.""

This isn't just about my Dad. My Dad and Mom are one. They work together in all things. They know each other better than anyone else could know them. My Mom meets these qualifications.

- **Grave** – dignified, serious about spiritual matters, not foolish or flippant in conduct.
- **Not slanderers** – does not speak falsely or maliciously about others; trustworthy in speech.
- **Sober** – self-controlled, clear-minded, not driven by emotions or excess.
- **Faithful in all things** – dependable in every responsibility, steadfast in commitment to the Lord and family.

And I know she doesn't see herself as good enough. The Bible says there's none good. We aren't perfect, but I know she meets the qualifications. For I know her. For I know him. A deacon and his wife stands in the gap for the church—protecting the unity of the church, serving needs, and supporting the pastor of the church. A deacon watches for the spiritual and physical needs of the flock.

""**Acts 6:6-7**

Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.""

With Dad being ordained a deacon here, there word of God will increase and the number of disciples will be multiplied greatly.

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## **The Courage of Gap-Standers**

Standing in the gap is not safe. Hey, I know what most people think of me that are outside of this area. "He's got his family down there in West Louisville. It's dangerous out there."

Let me tell you this right now. We're doing the will of God. When you're doing what God asks you to do, you get God's protection and there is no safer place than to be under God's protection. Not doing what God says to do, no matter where you physically live, is the dangerous thing to do.

A gap stander has courage. My Dad is not afraid. I am not afraid. Nathan is not afraid. A gap stander is one who: faces the enemy head-on, takes the hits first, feels the loneliness of being one of the few willing to stand.

- **Moses** stood between God's wrath and Israel's sin (Exodus 32:11–14).
- **David** stood before Goliath when the army cowered (1 Samuel 17:32).
- **Stephen** stood before the council with boldness (Acts 6–7), even though it cost his life.
- **Esther** stood before the king at the risk of her life to save her people (Esther 4:13–16).
- **Deborah** stood as judge and prophetess when Israel's leadership faltered (Judges 4–5).
- **Abigail** stood between David's anger and her household's destruction (1 Samuel 25:18–35).
- **Rahab** stood between the Israelite spies and certain death by hiding them (Joshua 2:1–21).
- **The Widow of Zarephath** stood between famine and God's prophet, giving her last meal in faith (1 Kings 17:8–16).

Are you going to be one of these men and women who stand in the gap? If so, make the decision right now. And you will be rewarded greatly by God.

"For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." Honor from God Himself, a good degree. Boldness to stand even stronger in the future. Eternal reward that can't be taken away. My Dad's life is just beginning—he has eternal life. He's just at the start. And I'll see him in heaven forever.

### **If You Want To Be There in Heaven...**

Look, today, if you want to be with my Dad in heaven, I need you to listen. I have great joy because of my Dad right there. Look, I could care less about the Baptist name. Really. I don't care what religious name you give yourself. Not important.

Being a Baptist doesn't save you. Being a Catholic doesn't save you. Being a Pentecostal doesn't save you. I don't care about those things. My Dad doesn't care about those things.

JESUS SAVES YOU. We give our loyalty to Jesus Christ. Here at this church and out there in the streets, we preach Jesus Christ. You need to believe what my Dad believes to get to heaven. Tell me if you believe what he believes today:

1. (Show Romans 3:23) We're all sinners. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Do you believe that? You've done wrong in your life. I've done wrong in my life.
2. (Show Romans 6:23) The payment for our sin is death. For the wages of sin is death. It's not just a first death, though. There's a second death and that's hell. If I had to pay for my sins, I would die and go to hell. You would too. That's the penalty for sin. Do you believe that?
3. (Show Romans 5:8) We deserve death and hell, but where do you think God wants you to go? Heaven or hell? He wants you in heaven. So He sent Jesus Christ, the Son of God and God in the flesh, to save you. He paid your penalty of death and hell. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
4. (Show 1 John 4:14) Jesus was perfect and without sin. He has no sin. We sinned. He took the sins of the whole world, every sin, and paid the penalty for them. He died, was buried, and arose from the dead. Do you believe Jesus died for YOUR SINS and arose victorious?
5. (Show Acts 16:30-31) There's only thing the Bible says you must do to be saved. What must I do to be saved? One thing. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." The Bible doesn't lie to you. What does that mean—to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?
6. Simply change your mind and give up all the other things that you think saves you. Your religion, your water baptism isn't alive, your church attendance, your good works, your repenting of sin, you asking forgiveness, you, you, you. It's not you. It's so simple. Don't miss this. It's Jesus Christ alone. His sacrifice is enough, on its own, to save you. So you



believe IN what He did for you—not what you do for Him. That's silly. It's 100% what He did for you.

7. So, you must believe that Jesus, on His own, without you doing good works, can save you. Do you believe that Jesus Christ ALONE can save you from 100% of your sins? You have to believe He paid for all your sins. If He didn't, we're all headed to hell.
8. If He didn't pay for that murder here in Louisville the other day, then He didn't pay for the murder king David committed or the murder Moses committed or the suicide Saul and Samson committed. Jesus paid it all.
9. That's what you believe, and that's the moment He saves you. All the burden is lifted from you and placed on the Lord Jesus Christ. And He can take it. HE IS THE MAN WHO STOOD IN THE GAP. It's a gap we couldn't hold.
10. (Show John 6:47) If you believe, it's your choice right now, today is the day of salvation, if you believe Jesus alone can save you without anything else, He will save you. He will give you everlasting life right now. He says, "He that believeth on me HATH everlasting life." You cannot lose something that Jesus gave you and that he calls EVER LASTING. You have to believe that or you're still believing in yourself and not in Him.

Be wise today. Give all the other things up that you've been taught. And trust the words of Jesus Christ. He's the boss. Don't lift other things up above Him. Simply believe IN Him. And know that you are saved because of Jesus Christ. My Dad has believed that, and he's out here spreading the word, with my Mom, to others who will hear. And some of those people are here right now. We are not ashamed of the truth.

I want to ask my Dad to please come stand here on the stage with me. Let's pray for this ordination right now as a church.

"Father God, we pray right now as a church with friends and family here today that you bless the rest of this service and the rest of the time we have here together. We know you have called my Dad to be a Deacon here at this church. He's already been doing the work of a Deacon. We pray for him now that you will greatly bless him, improve his health, his knees, and keep him going here for many, many years spreading the truth of your words to this community and to the ends of this earth. In Jesus name we pray, Amen."

## **Certificate of Ordination**

At this time, I'm going to ask Goddard and Nathan to please come forward to the stage. My Dad, Gary Tapp, meets all the qualifications for a Deacon.

We want to provide this Signed Bible to Dad as a gift. Read and present the certificate of ordination. Have Dad stand right next to pulpit. Have Goddard and Nathan lay their hands upon



Dad's shoulders. I lay my hands upon his shoulders. And I will pray for him. Then Nathan to pray. Then Goddard to pray. We say Amen together.

SLIDE – Present Deacon Gary Tapp

Dad to address the congregation if he would like. When he's done, have him stand down front in front of the pulpit. Bring Mom to the front of the church. Bring the family up to the front.

Have State Senator Aaron Reed say the final prayer for True Words Baptist Church, Deacon Gary Tapp, and Family. If Aaron is not available, choose another man from the congregation.

Sing one more song and pray.

Have the rest of the church come up and meet the family.

Get a picture of the church all together!