
The Shepherd's Heart, A gift from God

Good morning, church family. It is a genuine honor to stand before you today on this special occasion. I want to personally thank Pastor Mona and Pastor Glenn, and their team, for their friendship and their invitation. We are here to celebrate Pastor Mona and Pastor Glenn, but in doing so, we are really celebrating God's faithfulness—because a good shepherd is one of the most precious gifts God gives to a local church.

Let's turn our hearts and minds to a few words from the Apostle Paul in **1 Thessalonians 5:12-13**:

"We ask you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other."

1. The Divine Calling: A Work that Deserves Respect

When you look at this verse, the first thing Paul mentions is their **work**. Ministry is not a 9-to-5 job; it's a **24/7 calling** that reaches into every corner of life.

- **"Those who work hard among you"**: The word Paul uses for "work hard" means to *toil to the point of exhaustion*—it's a labor of love. It's the late-night counseling session, the hospital visit, the hours of solitary study to rightly divide the Word, and the constant burden of caring for souls. A shepherd's work never truly ends.
 - **Acknowledge the heavy weight of leadership**: Your pastors are asked to lead, to teach, to counsel, to comfort, and to pray, all while battling the same temptations and weariness we all face. You see the sermons, but you don't always see the spiritual battles fought in preparation. I want you all to know, we are not perfect, but we care.
 - **The Command: Respect**. Paul asks the church to **"respect those who labor among you."** This respect isn't just for their personality, but for the *office*—the task God has given them. It's an acknowledgment that they are called, set apart, and serving in Christ's army.
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2. The Shepherd's Heart: Care, Admonishment, and Vision

The pastor's work:

- **"Who care for you in the Lord":** This is the heart of a shepherd. It's the kindness, the patience, and the profound love that moves your pastor to rejoice with you in your triumphs and weep with you in your sorrow. They are the ones who put the needs of the flock before their own comfort.
 - **"And who admonish you":** This is often the hardest part of the job. "Admonish" means to warn or instruct with kindness. It means sometimes speaking the **hard truth** when we don't want to hear it, all for the purpose of guiding us back onto the right path. It takes courage to tell the truth in love, and it is a sign of a true shepherd, not a hireling. **Matthew 7:1 says. Judge not, that ye be not judged! I heard a story, where a church going member was corrected by a pastor.** They were highly offended and couldn't believe they were judged! Who are they to judge me? Your pastors are not judging you, they're coming to you and correcting you out of love for you and your salvation. Even the Apostle Paul sent letters to churches for correction out of love.
 - **The Vision:** Your pastor is committed to bringing you to **spiritual maturity**—that's the ultimate goal of their ministry, as **Ephesians 4:11-12 reminds us, 11 And He gave some apostle, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors, and some teachers 12 for the perfecting of the saints, for the body of Christ.** They are helping to equip *you* for the work of ministry, so the whole body is built up in love.
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3. Your Privilege: Hold Them in Highest Regard

The conclusion of Paul's thought is the church's response: **1 Thessalonians 5:13 "Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work."** This is our moment to show our appreciation.

Appreciation is an active word, and it's a commitment. How do you, as a congregation, fulfill this charge?

- **Pray for your pastors daily.** They are on the front lines, and the enemy is always seeking to discourage him. Pray for their strength, their family, their wisdom, and their joy.
- **Encourage your pastors consistently.** Don't only tell them when something goes wrong. Tell them when a sermon helped you, when a word of advice made a difference, or simply that you're grateful for their faithfulness. A sincere word of appreciation is like water to a thirsty soul.

- **Follow their faith and leadership (Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Hebrews 13:17 says, “ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you).** Submit to the godly direction and vision they set for the church. The Bible tells us to make their work a **joy**, not a burden.
- When I came to God, almost 8 years ago, I wanted to help people. I went to Bishop Ferris, and I asked him , If the organization, Church of God, had a course or teaching on being a Christian Counsellor. He inquired for me, but said there was not at this time. He asked me If I would consider taking the role of a Pastor, I quickly said no that is not for me. I said I was unworthy of that, and I was not sure if I could stand in front of a congregation and preach a sermon. Today, I feel the same way. But to my surprise, the people I seem to talk and listen to the most, are Pastors. We are not perfect, but we do love people. We make mistakes, but we care. A Good Pastor has a heart for the congregation and wants no one to be lost. They are a good Shepherd tending the flock.

Conclusion: A Word to the Pastor

Pastor Mona and Pastor Glenn, on behalf of this entire congregation, on behalf of myself and Tammy and on behalf of every life you’ve touched: **Thank you.**

Because of your dedication to God’s work and His Word, 2 Corinthians 3:2-3 says , You yourselves , (this congregation, and others that you have touched,) are the letters of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. 3 And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, (Pastor Mona and Pastor Glen), written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Thank you for your **faithfulness to God’s Word**, for your **courageous leadership**, and for the **sacrificial love** you pour out for this community. You are good shepherds, and you are a precious gift from the Chief Shepherd himself, Jesus Christ. May the Lord continue to strengthen you, to bless your family, and to multiply the fruit of your faithful ministry for years to come.

(Closing Prayer: Offer a brief, heartfelt prayer of blessing over the pastor, his family, and the church.)