# 6.1. Life-Giving Shepherds: 1 Thess. 1.

The Lord God loves his people, so he gives them the most precious of gifts, **shepherds** who will feed His people and lead them to abundant life. First, God raised up the Lord Jesus as the “**great shepherd** of the sheep” (Heb. 13:20). Jesus gives us abundant “life,” for he promises: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn. 10:11). But, God also promises “shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding” (Jer. 3:15).

Has God ever put on your heart a people, and has he filled your heart with a deep desire that they may have “life abundantly” (Jn. 10:10)? If the answer is “yes,” the Lord God may be calling you to His Kingdom service as a shepherd.

You may be **called**, but are you **chosen** to join the select band of the Great Shepherd, who will shepherd His precious sheep? The Lord Jesus reminds us, “Many are called, but few are chosen” (Mt. 22:14). The Lord’s “chosen shepherds” share His **shepherd’s heart**. They are “shepherds after God’s own heart” (Jer. 3:15). And, they are “good” shepherds willing to “lay down” their lives for the sheep (Jn. 10:10). So, if you have a shepherd’s heart, answer the Lord God’s call to serve Him in these ways.

# First, serve the Lord Sacrificially as a Life-Giving Shepherd (read).

As a Life-giving Shepherd, make up your mind to serve the Lord sacrificially to bring life to your people. Paul and his fellow shepherds sacrificed for the people of Thessalonica, for he said:“…though we had already **suffered** and been **shamefully** **treated** at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the **gospel of God** in the midst of much conflict.  1 Thess. 2:1a-2. Like Paul, bringing your people life by the “Gospel of God” may cause you to sacrifice comfort for “suffering,” reputation for “shameful treatment,” and peace for “conflict.” But, realize that such sacrificial service pleases the Lord God and His Christ. For, Paul saw himself as “**approved by God** to be **entrusted** with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but **to please God** who tests our hearts” (1 Thess. 2:4b). Your service must sacrifice Self-Interest above all else, for Paul confirms: “For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but **Jesus Christ as Lord**, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.” 2 Cor. 4:5

# Second, sustain your people Supportively as the Lord’s Life-Giving Shepherd (read)

It makes no sense to share with your people the Life-giving Gospel yet withhold your very heart and life. Rather, good shepherding requires your life-giving support, like a parent who shares herself freely with her precious child. Paul says of himself, “we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children” (1 Thess. 2:7b). Like a nursing mother giving of herself, Paul gives his heart-affections and very life to his people, saying: “So, being **affectionately desirous** of you, we were ready to **share** with you not only the **gospel of God** but also our **own selves**, because you had become **very dear to us**. 1 Thess. 2:8

# Finally, sow Spiritual Life and Growth as the Lord’s Life-Giving Shepherd.

Often, shepherding requires us to be more challenging thank unconditionally nurturing, so Paul also describes his care paternally, saying: “You are witnesses, and God also, how **holy** and **righteous** and **blameless** was our conduct toward you believers. For you know how, **like a father** with his children” 1 Thess. 2:10-11. Such shepherding is directive, so Paul says: “we **exhorted** each one of you and **encouraged** you and **charged** you to **walk in a manner** **worthy of God**, who **calls** you into his own **kingdom** and **glory**. 1 Thess. 2:12. While shepherds comfort and nurture their people in all situations of life, they also “**exhort**” them to make progress in the Lord; “**encourage**” by strengthening them to walk, and “**charging**” or challenging them with the weight of their calling to live worthy of God’s “**glory**” and “**kingdom**.” Such boldness seems humanly audacious, but the reality is that you are called as a shepherd to speak the very words of God rather than your human opinion, so Paul reminds his people that they are receiving not just human opinion but “the **word of God**, which you heard from us” (1 Thess. 2:13b).

Yes, shepherding is an often thankless service, but it promises the **greatest reward**. Paul recognized that when His people grew and thrived, they became his “**hope** or **joy** or **crown** of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming”! (1 Thess. 2:19)