

## Timothy Was an Apostle, Not a Pastor

It is often assumed that Timothy was a pastor because he was a leader in the church. However, Timothy is never referred to as a pastor in the Scriptures. Let's examine how he is described in the Bible.

1. **Fellow worker** - Romans 16:21: "Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen."
2. **Beloved and faithful child in the Lord** - 1 Corinthians 4:17: "That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church."
3. **Brother and coworker** - 1 Thessalonians 3:2: "and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith."

If Timothy wasn't a pastor, what was his role? He was clearly trusted by Paul and seen as a leader in the church. The best way to describe Timothy is as an apostle/missionary and evangelist. He is directly referred to as an apostle:

*1 Thessalonians 2:6: "Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ."*

In this verse, the "we" likely refers to the writers of the letter, including Timothy. Paul includes Timothy among the apostles who chose not to make demands.

To understand Timothy's role, we need to examine how he functioned. Timothy seemed to function like an apostle, as there were other apostles outside of the twelve who were sent as missionaries to spread the gospel. Timothy followed up on established churches (often founded by Paul) to provide correction, encouragement, and teaching before moving on to the next place. This aligns with apostolic work, similar to what Paul and Barnabas did. Timothy didn't settle long-term to shepherd believers in a city, which was the role of the elders.

Timothy was sent to tend to Paul's missionary work in various cities, including Berea (Acts 17:14-15), Athens (Acts 17:14-15), Macedonia (Acts 18:5; 19:22), Corinth (1 Corinthians 14:17), Philippi (Phillipians 2:19-20), Thessalonica (Thess 3:2,6, and Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). He visited different churches to provide support, correction, and teaching. This is the work of an apostle. Additionally, Timothy was instructed to do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5) and fulfill his ministry. Apostles often proclaim the gospel to unbelievers in new areas, and these roles of evangelist and apostle go hand in hand.

Based on Scripture, it appears that Timothy functioned more as an apostle than a pastor. Although he did important work in the church, pastoring was not among the tasks he was assigned by his spiritual father, Paul. It's worth noting this distinction because some use Timothy as an example to justify the role of pastors today. However, Timothy's role was that of an apostle, while the oversight and shepherding of the church were entrusted to the elders.