

## Marks of a True Apostle: Chosen by God

Scripture: Galatians 1:15–16

Code: B131125

Have you ever met an apostle? Considering the vast number of people today who have laid claim to the highest of biblical offices, it's entirely possible you have at some point. Some people have even tried to label *me* an apostle for this generation.

But has the apostolic office truly continued throughout church history till today, or have these modern apostles usurped authority that does not belong to them?

The continuation of the apostolic office is a key feature of the charismatic movement. Why? Because Scripture is clear that signs and wonders were given by God to verify the authenticity of His apostles. And if—as charismatics believe and teach—those apostolic gifts continue today, so must the *office* of apostle. And while not all charismatics recognize the authority of apostles in the church today—and while many continuationists disavow modern apostleship altogether—many of the most important figures in the charismatic movement today are self-professing apostles.

The fact is *apostle* is not just a generic term for the church to throw around and apply as it sees fit. The term signified specific people doing specific work at a specific time in the life of the church. And in order to understand the full significance of what the title means—and to hold accountable the men and women who would lay claim to it today—we need to examine the biblical marks of an apostle.

To begin with, apostles in Scripture did not simply self-apply their title. They weren't required to submit an application or letters of recommendation. And there weren't any extravagant membership fees.

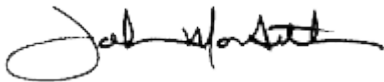
Instead, the New Testament apostles were personally *chosen by God*. Paul spends most of 2 Corinthians defending his apostleship and comparing his own ministry to some false apostles who had invaded the Corinthian church. He opened the book with a familiar greeting that highlights where he received his apostolic calling from: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God” (2 Corinthians 1:1). He began his first letter to the Corinthian church with similar words: “Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” (1 Corinthians 1:1). And he echoed that same idea in Ephesians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, and 2 Timothy 1:1. The clear testimony of Paul's writing is that he was an apostle because he had been chosen for that role *by God*.

He went into even more detail in Galatians 1:15-16, where he wrote, “When God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.” Paul's ministry was not his own achievement—he gave all the credit for his apostolic work to God. It was the Lord who ordained him before he was even born, setting him aside for salvation and the work of the gospel. And by identifying that God's ordaining work took place while he was still in his mother's womb, Paul illustrates just how passive a part he played in his apostolic calling.

Furthermore, in 1 Timothy 1:1, Paul writes that he serves as “an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus.” Paul had a direct charge from God the Father and Jesus Christ to carry out his ministry. The language he uses refers to a royal command that is not negotiable. It was a divine mandate on his life.

That was the true nature of the apostolic calling. It wasn't a special club you joined. It was God's divine ordination on specific men, setting them aside for specific work He chose to accomplish through them.

The apostles were chosen by God. But even that was not their only necessary credential. As we'll see next time, they were also *appointed by Christ*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John MacArthur". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

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