

Laying on of Hands

Not much is written about the laying on of hands, but it was so important that the writer of Hebrews said that it was one of the foundational teachings of the Christian faith.

Hebrews 6:1-2 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, **of laying on of hands**, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

Jesus also made the laying on of hands part of the gospel message that should be preached to all the nations.

Mark 16:15-18 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; "they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; **they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.**"

Jesus set an example for us by laying his hands on people, and healing them.

Mark 5:22, 23 And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. **Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed**, and she will live."

Jairus believed that through Jesus' laying hands on his daughter, she would be healed. Just one problem, while Jesus was on his way to lay hands on the girl she died. That was not a problem for Jesus, he went and laid hands on her anyway.

Mark 5:39-42 When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. **Then He took the child by the hand**, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." **Immediately the girl arose and walked**, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement.

We can see another example of laying on hands in the book of Acts, this is one way that God used the Apostle Paul on the Island of Malta.

Acts 28:8 And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and **he laid his hands on him and healed him.**

Another blessing that comes from the laying on of hands, is praying for people to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul came to Corinth and found some believers who professed faith in Jesus, and were baptized. Paul had one question for them.

Acts 19:2 he said to them, "**Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?**" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."

Here is evidence that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a separate experience from being born again and being water baptized. What did Paul do?

Acts 19:6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

There is another similar example, after Philip went to Samaria there was tremendous move of God with miracles, healings, deliverance from demons, with many people coming to faith in Jesus Christ, and being baptized. When news reached Jerusalem, they sent Peter and John.

Acts 8:14-16 When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

The Samaritans were believers in Jesus and had been baptized, healed and delivered, but they had not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So, when Peter and John learned they had not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they laid hands on them and then they were filled with the Spirit.

Acts 8:17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Among the crowd that saw people receiving the Holy Spirit, was a convert named Simon, who came from a background of sorcery. Simon thought that he could buy the gift of God.

Acts 8:18-20 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!

Needless to say, there is a big danger in trying to make merchandise with the gifts of God. God is not mocked; nobody with wrong motives can play with the gifts of God. And there are warnings about laying on of hands improperly.

1 Timothy 5:22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

Paul said, do not be in a hurry to lay hands on people, and there are several reasons why. First, we'll address the aspect of partaking of other people's sin. The laying on of hands can be abused, we need discernment about the person who is doing the laying on of hands, and why they are laying hands on people. Some false ministers have turned the laying on of hands into a big show, for self-promotion and money. By associating with these corrupt ministers, we become partakers of their sins. Do not let anyone who has bad teaching, and is greedy or immoral, to lay their hands on you. As we just read, keep yourself pure.

We can also see in the Old Testament how sin can be transferred through the laying on of hands. All the Old Testament sacrifices involve the same principle, that the sin and guilt of the person offering the sacrifice are transferred to the animal being sacrificed.

Leviticus 16:20-22 "And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. "Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. "The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.

We saw that Aaron laid his hands on the head, confessed sin, and that the sin was transferred onto the animal. We need to be careful to know who is putting their hands on us, and whether they are living in sin or living a holy life. We should also be concerned over what they are pronouncing over us. By allowing them to lay hands on us, and making pronouncements over us, we are complicit with their sins, if they are in sin. Keep yourselves pure.

Another aspect of not being in a hurry to lay hands on somebody, has to do with ordaining leaders. In every church that Paul established, he would recognize some who had proven character as elders. Spiritual maturity and proven character are the keys, which is why Paul gave a number of admonitions about it.

1 Timothy 3:4-7 ... one who **rules his own house well**, having his **children in submission** with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); **not a novice**, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover, he must have a **good testimony among those who are outside**, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Being in a rush to give people titles and positions, can be very destructive. They can ruin the testimony of the church to the world, and may give leadership to corrupt, immature and proud people. In the first church they were very selective about recognizing people before the church.

Acts 6:2-3 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables." Therefore, brethren, **seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom**, whom we may appoint over this business;

Sadly, today many leadership positions are given by seniority or by money concerns. The Apostles and all the church approved the character of the men selected, and recognized them by the laying on of hands. To no surprise, God greatly used these men beyond their original duties, one of them was Philip whom God used in Samaria.

Acts 6:5,6 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose **Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip**, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and **when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.**

Paul reminded Timothy how he also was recognized and gifted, through the laying on of hands.

1 Timothy 4:13-15 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect **the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands** of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

Paul himself was sent out by the Holy Spirit directly, and the prophets and elders who confirmed it laid hands on him to send him out.

Acts 13:1-3 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain **prophets and teachers**: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, **the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."** Then, having fasted and prayed, **and laid hands on them, they sent them away.**

There are also examples of the transfer of leadership from the Old Testament. When Moses was about to die, God told him to recognize Joshua in the presence of all Israel.

Numbers 27:18, 19 And the LORD said to Moses: "Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, **a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him;** "set him before Eleazar the priest and **before all the congregation,** and **inaugurate him** in their sight.

We will look at one more Old Testament example of laying on of hands, that is the blessing of the first born. In that culture the first born had responsibilities, and they also inherited the family wealth. Needless to say, this was a big deal for them. When Jacob was dying, Joseph brought his two sons for Jacob's blessing.

Genesis 48:13-14 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him. Then **Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger,** and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn.

Joseph thought Jacob made a mistake when he crossed his hands and blessed the younger. So, Joseph tried to fix the problem.

Genesis 48:17-19 Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so, he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, "**Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.**" But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; **but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he,** and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."

Much could be said about the blessings of inheritance, but that's another study. So, let's review what we've seen about the Laying on of hands.

- Laying on of hands is a foundational teaching
- Laying on of hands to heal the sick is part of the gospel, to be preached to all nations
- Laying on of hands is one way people receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit
- Laying on of hands should not be done in a hurry, discernment & discretion is required
- Laying on of hands transfers sin, do not partake other people's sin.
- Laying on of hands is used to recognize leaders, and impart spiritual gifts
- Laying on of hands for leadership, requires candidates to have proven character.
- Laying on of hands is used to send missionaries with the blessings of the church
- Laying on of hands is to impart blessings to family heirs.

So, remember that the laying on of hands was commanded by Jesus, it is a foundational teaching of the Christian faith. So, be bold and step out by faith, and God will use you to lay hands on the sick, and God will heal them. We should exercise patience, discernment and wisdom, in the laying on of hands, and above all, keep ourselves pure.