

Caution for Laying on of Hands

In 1 Timothy 5:22 Paul warns us, “Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily.” There are two biblical reasons for such a caution.

First, the laying on of hands is used for ordination, and people should not be set into their ministry “hastily” or prematurely (1 Timothy 3:10). People should first be tested lest they become proud and fall into sin. Character always precedes ministry. The local church should be a place where people have the opportunity to serve before receiving any recognized position. This way people naturally grow into an ordained position instead of gaining recognition too soon, a premature promotion and visibility which often results in pride, immature leadership, and problems at the helm.

Second, some people are involved in unclean things (2 Corinthians 6: 17). The Bible commands us not to touch any unclean thing. It is imperative that leaders know the person they are about to ordain. Ordination should never be on the basis of good skills, talents, good impressions, or even strong anointing. Ordination must be carefully administered on the basis of one’s call, function, receptivity in the existing body and leadership, and character qualifications. 1 Timothy 3:1-10 gives a partial listing of the character expectations one must exhibit before receiving any public recognition through the laying on of hands. If a spiritual novice were to begin placing people into their ministry and commissioning people, more harm could be done than good. Furthermore, we must realize that the laying on of hands for ministry recognition is never a private ceremony, done in isolation. Ministry leaders must be present (Acts 13:1-3).

Review:

1. What is the purpose of the laying on of hands?
2. Who may lay hands on the sick?
3. What are some of the character qualifications according to 1 Timothy 3:1-10 that one must exhibit before the laying on of hands?

Our Lord chooses to do His ministry through His children.

-Ron Lewis

The Laying on of Hands

Study #24



Laying on of Hands

According to Hebrews 6:2, the “laying on of hands” is an elementary teaching. Sometimes, when a mature believer is praying for someone, he will gently place a hand on the person. God has designed this human contact as a means of appointing, imparting, healing and infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Scriptural Purposes for Laying on of Hands: Public Ordination

To set people into their ministry through a public ordination service (Acts 6:1-6, 13:1-3), the leaders of the church lay hands on those called to Christian service to set them into their ministry. Ordination is for those whom God has called and have been recognized by the leaders and the people they serve.

Some of the ministries recognized by ordination and the laying on of hands:

Senior pastors – the primary leader of the church

Church pastors or elders – those who oversee church members

Deacons – those who serve the practical needs of a church

Missionaries or church-planters – those sent out by the church to spread the gospel and plant or start new churches

God and Father of all, we praise you for your infinite love in calling us to be a holy people in the kingdom of your Son Jesus our Lord, who is the image of your eternal and invisible glory, the firstborn among many brethren, and the head of the Church. We thank you that by his death he has overcome death, and, having ascended into heaven, has poured his gifts abundantly upon your people, making some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry and the building up of his body.

Here the Bishop lays hands upon the head of the ordinand, the Priests who are present also laying on their hands. At the same time the Bishop prays:

“Therefore, Father, through Jesus Christ your Son, give your Holy Spirit to (-); fill him with grace and power, and make him a priest in your Church.”

Anglican Book of Common Prayer, Ordination Service

Scriptural Purposes for Laying on of Hands: Impartation of Spiritual Gifts

For an impartation of spiritual gifts by the pastors, elders or senior ministers

The apostle Paul exhorted Timothy: “Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery” (1 Timothy 4:14).

For healing

And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” (Mark 16:16-19)

All who believe may lay hands on the sick, and according to Jesus, the sick shall recover! God provides healing for us so that we can go and take healing to those in need (Acts 28:3-10). In the Gospels, Jesus laid hands on the sick for their recovery. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He commissioned His disciples to go and do the same. Since then, until today, this practice of laying hands on the sick has been used of God to touch, heal and bring deliverance to multitudes.

For those wanting to receive the Holy Spirit

People have been filled by the Holy Spirit without the laying on of hands, but a common way is through the laying on of hands by other Spirit-filled Christians. Any believer may be asked to pray for others who desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit. At these times, God instructs us to gently lay hands on other believers and claim the promise of God for their lives. Whereas our job is simply to step out in faith and obey, God’s job is to fulfill His Word in their lives. Those who oppose our active involvement in this type of ministry must be reminded that our Lord chooses to do His ministry through His children (Mark 16:20). We are actually called co-laborers with Christ (2 Corinthians 6:1).