

The Laying on of Hands, Part 2

Blessing, Transference and Identification

What is the point of the laying on of hands? What is God illustrating to us?

In Part 1 of this presentation, we looked at how [the laying on of hands reflects God's laying His hand of blessing upon us](#). We began our study concentrating on how the laying on of hands relates to [salvation](#).

Our salvation is a result of God laying His hand of blessing upon us. He literally [laid our sin on the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world](#).

One of the purposes of the laying on of hands is for [transference](#).

By laying on His hand, God [transferred](#) our punishment on the Lord Jesus Christ who [took our place](#). Not only did he take our place in his death, but also in his rising from the dead, ultimately to be seated at God's right hand.

Another purpose of the laying on of hands is for [identification](#).

In Christ's sufferings and glory, we are now [identified with him](#). We [assume the place he took for us](#) in his crucifixion, his resurrection, and his ascension, with all the attendant benefits.

A key point to retain is that throughout the Bible, the [laying on of hands in blessing identifies the one doing it with the Christ](#), whether in anticipation, realization or retrospect. This will aid us in appreciating the significance of the laying on of hands as it pertains to [ministry](#).

Laying on of Hands is Fundamental to Understand

Please turn to Hebrews 6. Too often people have perceived the laying on of hands as some sort of secret initiation into the mysteries of God. The opposite is true when we make use of it as God intended, and as He guides us.

- It's not mystical, but it is *intimate*.
- It's not magical, but it is *powerful*.
- **It's not for the initiated, but it is for the *identified*.**

Any power realized in the course of the laying on of hands derives not from some one-size-fits-all formula, but **from a personal realization** that in the act, **we identify and are identified with Christ**. We don't always lay on hands in every situation any more so than we would always choose to speak in tongues out loud, regardless of the circumstances. **We do it as we are inspired by God**, and no more often than that. It is not the "be-all and end-all" of ministry.

It's surprising to note, however, that Hebrews says that the laying on of hands belongs with "the **elementary** doctrine of Christ" and is part of "a **foundation** of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God." In other words, the laying on of hands is not reserved for in-depth instruction — it's **fundamental to understand!** Let's read this declaration together.

Hebrews 6:1,2:

Therefore let us leave the **elementary** doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a **foundation** of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

and of instruction about washings, **the laying on of hands**, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

These two verses are dealing with truths that are part of a "foundation," the "elementary doctrine of Christ." The focus on

fundamentals begins three verses earlier where we find mentions of the “basic principles of the oracles of God” and “milk” as contrasted with solid food.

Hebrews 5:12:

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the [basic principles](#) of the oracles of God. You need [milk](#), not solid food,

So now in the runup to the mention of the laying on of hands we have “basic principles,” “milk,” “elementary doctrine,” and “foundation.” Shouldn’t it be evident from these references that the laying on of hands is part of the [underpinnings of Christianity](#)? Indeed it is, because it supports the doctrine of [our identification with Christ](#).

Whenever it’s administered, the laying on of hands [directs our thoughts back to Christ](#): back to [the faith](#), back to [grace](#), and back to [salvation](#). It’s not some emblem of a secret society of the fully initiated. Our badge of honor is in [what he did for us, not in what we do or have done for ourselves](#).

In Anointing

[Two actions](#) are consistently noted in the Bible as being [emblematic of an outpouring of the spirit](#), and they are [anointing](#) and the [laying on of hands](#). Let’s take a moment to talk about anointing.

To anoint is to apply oil or ointment to a person or object. In the Bible, anointing is a tangible indication of consecration, sanctification and setting apart.

To see the significance of anointing in the life of Christ, let’s take a look at Mark 14. Remember that the [title Christ means the “Anointed One”](#).

Shortly before his suffering and death, [one of Jesus' followers personally anointed him.](#)

Mark 14:3:

And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, [a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment](#) of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and [poured it over his head.](#)

How do you pour something on someone? With your hands. You lay hold on the vessel containing it and pour it out. Jesus Christ immediately understood the import of her act.

Mark 14:8,9:

She has done what she could; [she has anointed my body beforehand for burial.](#)

And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”

Evidently this woman had no doubts about Jesus' prophecy when he told his disciples that he would be delivered into the hands of men, be killed, and rise after three days. [She identified with the Anointed One and was prepared to be publicly identified with him.](#)

In Dedication

Like the woman who anointed him, we too wish to follow in his steps. Let's inspect the Gospel record to discover some of the ways that our Lord and Savior made use of the laying on of hands during his earthly ministry.

A consistent practice we can observe in various Gospels was that [Jesus Christ laid on hands to dedicate the children](#) that parents brought to him. When some bystanders objected, he made it clear that such

prayers were to be welcomed as a blessing, setting the child on a path for a life lived in service and devotion to God.

In Healing and Deliverance

No one contests that there was tremendous healing power in the touch of the Master's hand. Everyone knows that at times he laid hands on people to heal them. However, there were also times that he didn't. In imitating our Lord and Savior, we should remember that there is no single ready-made procedure we must follow in order to minister healing.

Jesus Christ healed people many different ways and in many different circumstances, including cases where he was not physically present. We see an example of this with the centurion whose servant was healed instantly when Jesus was in another place.

Please turn to Mark 5. Jesus attributed the healing to the centurion's faith, not to any physical act. Nevertheless, when [Jesus Christ laid hands on the sick](#) or when others touched him believing to be healed, it is indisputable that [power went forth](#). We see this in the record of the woman with a discharge of blood who reached out to touch the hem of his garment with the expectation of being healed.

Mark 5:30,33,34:

And Jesus, perceiving in himself that [power had gone out from him](#), immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "[Who touched my garments?](#)"

But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.

And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

It should be noted that there are numerous Gospel records of Christ [laying on hands to heal](#). Examples included people who were healed from leprosy, from deafness and dumbness, and from blindness; and in one instance, in raising a young girl from the dead.

Mark 6:5:

And he could do no mighty work there, except that he [laid his hands on a few sick people](#) and healed them.

Luke 4:40:

Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he [laid his hands on every one of them](#) and healed them.

Just because Jesus laid his hands on every one of them on this occasion does not set a standard for all time. Evidently in each of these separate instances, it was important for the affected individual to see themselves as [identified with Christ in receiving the blessing of bodily health](#). God knows what’s needed anytime we minister to someone and will guide us into the right course of action for that person at that time, whether or not that includes the laying on of hands.

In Ministering Grace

Healing is not man’s only need in this dying world; forgiveness is also in short supply. Ephesians exhorts us to [speak words that minister grace](#) to those who hear us. [Ministering grace](#) is an integral part of what many of us call simply “[ministering](#)”, [the practice of partnering with God to meet needs of the body and soul via energized words and deeds](#).

Ministering is a two-way street. James calls it the “prayer of faith”. When ministering to someone, you pray, involving God. You don’t just speak to God; you speak, *expecting that God will speak to you* to inspire words and actions that will meet the need.

Jesus was not the only one who healed the sick. In Matthew he sent forth the twelve to “heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers” and “cast out devils.”

Fast forward to Acts 5, where mention is made of signs and wonders being regularly done among the people.

Acts 5:12:

Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico.

“By the hands” indicates agency and at times involved the laying on of hands. One such instance was in Acts 3 when Peter took the lame man by the right hand and raised him up. We know the happy result: he was able to leap up, stand and walk. And the grateful recognition: that it was not by their own power, but by Christ’s.

Acts 3:16:

And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

That’s the point of our identification, isn’t it? To be made strong by faith in his name. In the first-century Church, the believers’ collective heart was consistently to see the hand of God in action in bringing deliverance to people. This is reflected in their unified prayer following the threats of Acts 4.

Acts 4:30:

while you [God] **stretch out your hand to heal**, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

One of the things we do for people in ministering to them is to help them to **receive and accept God’s forgiveness**. Speaking and acting gently as we walk in love, we show people how **to identify with Christ as their undisputed Savior** to rescue them from their shackles.

The disciples of Simon the sorcerer were seeking **a way out from the bond of iniquity** that had held them under the sway of their charismatic teacher. When the apostles **laid hands on them, they were released** and got born again.

Acts 8:17,18:

Then they **laid their hands on them** and they received the Holy Spirit.

Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given **through the laying on of the apostles' hands**, he offered them money,

Simon didn’t understand. He thought the power was in the person and in the action rather than in the Lord who heals. But Peter and John knew where the true authority lay and lovingly set him straight.

Another newcomer with daunting challenges was Saul of Tarsus. Prior to receiving salvation and being filled with the holy spirit, Saul had as much guilt to overcome as anyone had ever had. Fortunately, **Ananias had a big enough heart that he was willing to lay hands on this notorious murderer** of believers **and restore his sight**, in the process leading him into the new birth.

Acts 9:12,17,18:

and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and **lay his hands on him** so that he might regain his sight.”

So Ananias departed and entered the house. And **laying his hands on him** he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized [meaning, he was born again];

When **ministering grace** and forgiveness to people, the **laying on of hands** can be a wonderfully personal **way to establish a loving connection**, standing in God’s stead as Christ’s representatives. Love takes people all the way over to the other side, where victory awaits.

In Commissioning

Let’s return now to the Old Testament, where we will consider the record of Exodus 28.

Earlier we saw how **anointing could serve as a public indicator of being set apart for God’s service**, what we might today call **a leader’s commissioning**. Prophets, priests and kings were often anointed, symbolizing God’s favor and presence upon them.

Exodus 28:41:

And you shall put them [the priestly garments] on Aaron your brother, and on his sons with him, and shall **anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them**, that they may serve me as priests.

Exodus 29:1a,7:

“Now this is what you shall do to them to **consecrate them**, that they may serve me as priests...

You shall **take the anointing oil and pour it on his head** and anoint him.

The **laying on of hands to anoint** the priests was to the people an **outward sign of their ordination and consecration** in their duties.

Numbers 27 offers another telling example in this regard, when **Moses passed the mantle of leadership to his protégé Joshua**.

Numbers 27:18-23:

So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and **lay your hand on him**.

Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall **commission him in their sight**.

You shall **invest him with some of your authority, that all** the congregation of the people of Israel **may obey**.

And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. **At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in** [this is a Hebraism referring to **the exercise of leadership functions**], both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation.”

And Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and made him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation,

and **he laid his hands on him and commissioned him as the LORD directed** through Moses.

Deuteronomy 34 confirms the impact of Joshua’s commissioning.

Deuteronomy 34:9:

And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses **had laid his hands on him**. So the people of Israel obeyed him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses.

In 1 Samuel 15 we see a record where the prophet Samuel addresses the king Saul, whom he had previously anointed.

1 Samuel 15:17,18a:

And Samuel said, "Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? **The LORD anointed** you king over Israel.

And **the LORD sent you on a mission...**

Note that it is God, and not the one who does the anointing, who is the Source of the blessing. He is both Anointer and Commissioner.

The commissioning of leadership is not a phenomenon that is limited strictly to the Old Testament. The twelve appointed an additional seven when it became apparent that there was a need for physical support in order to minister to the needs of the widows in the Church.

Acts 6:2-6:

And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.

Therefore, brothers, **pick out from among you seven men** of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, **whom we will appoint to this duty.**

But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and

Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.

These they set before the apostles, and they **prayed and laid their hands on them.**

And again, as in the case of Joshua, the impact was an increase in obedience to the Word.

Acts 6:7:

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

A further milestone in the growth of the Church was realized when the local **prophets and teachers commissioned Barnabas and Saul, sending them out** on their first missionary journey to points west of Antioch.

Acts 13:1-3:

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, **“Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”**

Then after fasting and praying **they laid their hands on them and sent them off.**

As we have seen, commissioning continues with the advent of grace. The act identifies the one laying on hands with the one in their embrace, and indicates they are acting on God’s behalf in their ministering capacity. A blessing is being transferred or conferred, opening the way to avenues of service.

Please turn to 1 Timothy. Timothy’s commissioning is a prime example.

1 Timothy 4:14:

Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders [laid their hands on you](#).

2 Timothy 1:6,7:

For this reason I remind you to [fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands](#),

for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

The man of God Timothy was an apostle, a grace ministry. The gift of service that Timothy had received was conferred upon him by prophecy and by the laying on of hands of the council of elders, including Paul. The elders were doing God's bidding when they set Timothy apart in this manner.

What does it mean to be [publicly commissioned by God in an office of service](#)? Hebrews frames the answer beautifully. It's not that you're more special, or more capable, but that you're [identified with Him](#), and are [bringing the knowledge of identification](#) to the world.

Acting on Behalf of Men in Relation to God

Please turn to Hebrews 5.

Hebrews 5:1a, 4:

For every high priest chosen from among men is [appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God](#), ...

And [no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God](#), just as Aaron was.

The significance of the God-given honor of a grace ministry is that you're appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God. God

knows that you are no more perfect than others; but you have a commissioning to fulfill, a function to perform. So fan the flame!

Ambassadors for Christ

Today we are all ambassadors for Christ. The word “ambassador” comes from the same root as the word “elder.” An ambassador is not a title, but a *function*: the delivery of a divine message. Our authority as ambassadors comes, not from our function, but from the Message.

2 Corinthians 5:20:

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

We are Christ’s mouthpiece, speaking the message of reconciliation on his behalf! We have the anointing of the spirit, and have been sent forth by God on a mission. Truly He has laid His hand of blessing upon us!