



The Gifts & Ministries of the Holy Spirit Series

Part 2

The Doctrine of the Laying on of Hands

by

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The doctrine of the Laying on of hands

The First Principles

In the first grade a small child does not begin his study of math by solving higher equations. He starts with $1+1=2$. In like manner one must commence his Christian life by learning the first principles of the oracles of God - the first principles of the doctrine of Christ (Heb. 5:12: 6:1).

Paul lists the following in Hebrews (6:1-2).

- 1) Repentance from dead works
- 2) Faith toward God
- 3) The doctrine of baptisms
- 4) Laying on of hands
- 5) The resurrection of the dead
- 6) Eternal judgment

Laying on of hands is a spiritual practice that has its roots in the earliest events in the Old Testament and was continued into the New Testament. Applying the law of first mention we can go to the first appearance of the practice in **Genesis 48:13-18** to gain some insight into the practice and its operation. *13 Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them close to him. 14 But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn. 17 When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. 18 Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. In this instance **Jacob crossed his hands** to release the primary anointing on the younger rather than the older (the right hand is the hand of preeminent authority). The action of Joseph in trying to stop this indicates that Joseph understood that the laying on of hands was not merely a tradition or an action of blessing, but it involved the release and transmission of spiritual substance and once that substance was released **it could not be undone** or withdrawn.*

In the Old Testament the laying on of hands played a part in offering sacrifices and this action gives us the clearest view of the process involved in the laying on of hands.

On the Day of Atonement the High Priest was commanded to "**lay hands**" on one of the two goats used in the ceremony. *Leviticus 16:7-10, 21-22. ²¹ He will lay both of his hands on the goat's head and confess over it all the wickedness, rebellion, and sins of the people of Israel. **In this way, he will transfer the people's sins to the head of the goat.** Then a man specially chosen for the task will drive the goat into the wilderness. ²² As the goat goes into the wilderness, it will carry all the people's sins upon itself into a desolate land.*

The Aaronic priests were purified for service to God through the transfer of their sins to a bull. Similarly, when an Israelite presented a peace or a sin offering, he laid his hands upon the animal being offered, identifying himself with it and **transferring his guilt** to the animal. Thus, the animal was set apart by God through the laying on of hands. *Exodus 29:10; Leviticus 1:4; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:15.*

It is evident, therefore that there was a definite understanding of the principle of "**transference**" through the laying on of hands amongst primitive believers and a knowledge that tangible substance could be imparted from one to another when hands were laid upon the other. Again, this is confirmed in Numbers 27:18, 23 when Moses passed his ministry on to Joshua: *18 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; 20 "You shall put some of your authority on him, in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey him.*

Jesus built upon this understanding of transference of Spiritual substance through the laying on of hands by first demonstrating and then teaching His Disciples the same Ministry principles - especially in relationship to healing the sick. The Disciples clearly understood the efficacy of the practice and its place in the ancient traditions of Israel. In His final Words to the Church Jesus commanded His followers in every generation to follow His example and minister to others with the Power of the Holy Spirit. **Mark 16 v 17** *And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

We can compile the following list to help us understand viable Biblical operations of the laying on of hands:

A. Physical healing.

*Matthew 8:2-4, 14-15; 20:34 Mark 1:41; 6:5; 5:3; 7:32-33; 8:23, 25; 16:18
Luke 4:40; 13:13; 22:50-51 Acts 9:10-12, 17; 28:8 James 5:14*

B. Casting out of demonic spirits.

Luke 4:40-41; 13:11-13

C. The baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:17-19; 9:12, 17; 19:6

D. The impartation of Spiritual gifts/ministry gifts.

I Timothy 4:14 II Timothy 1:6

E. Separation for ministry

Numbers 8:10-11; 27:18, 20, 23 Acts 6:5-6; 13:3

F. Raising the dead.

Matthew 9:18, 25

G. Impartation of spiritual authority for leadership.

Numbers 27:16-23

H. Impartation of spiritual blessing.

Mark 10:13, 16 (Matthew 19:13-15)

I. Various miracles.

Acts 5:12; 14:3

J. Impartation of strength.

Daniel 10:16-19

Ministering the anointing through the laying on of hands

This doctrine is of critical importance to Christianity because it shows that God works and deals with mankind through fallible, imperfect human beings He chooses and sets apart for His purpose.

Understanding the principle of transference of blessing through the laying on of hands, we can investigate the Lord's command to minister healing through this process.

The miracle of the healing of the woman with the issue of blood helps us to further understand this "flow" of power through us to the sick. **Luke 8:43-48** Jesus was fully aware of virtue - or the anointing, leaving His body and being transferred into the body of the sick woman. The woman drew out the anointing by her faith. There was both transference and effect.

When we minister, the “flow” of blessing or anointing comes from the Spirit through us to the seeker. This does not mean that we are transmitting something that we own; rather we become **a channel for the Spirit of God** to flow through to accomplish the healing. Rather like a pipe transferring water from one location to another or a faucet delivering water from the reservoir many miles away - or the flow of electricity through cables and out of a socket. Thinking of the anointing in this way can help us in ministering to the sick. Rather than placing our hands on the seeker and hoping for some effect, we can focus on God and learn to interact with the Holy Spirit while making ourselves available to Him as a channel of blessing.

Derek Prince writes:

"In one case, the laying on of hands may be a channel through which the supernatural gift of healings operates. In this case, the person who lays hands by this act transmits the supernatural healing virtue, or power of God to the sick body, and very often the person receiving prayer actually feels within his or her own body the supernatural power of God.

At other times, however, there is no sensation of power at all, but the laying on of hands is simply an act of faith and of obedience to God's Word. However if there is genuine faith, the result of healing will follow, even though there may be no dramatic or supernatural experience."

Laying on of hands – Guidelines

Touching is an intimate act that, when combined with prayer communicates love and can be a means of communicating healing power to the sick person. Jesus frequently touched or was touched by those he healed. For example, he touched a leper (*Mat.8:2-4*), touched the coffin before commanding the widow's son to rise from the dead (*Lk 7:11-15*) and was touched by a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years (*Lk. 8:43-48*). Jesus regularly laid hands on the sick when he prayed for them (*Mark 6:5*), as did the disciples (*Acts 28:8*).

1. Always ask a person's **permission** before laying hands on him or her. **Be gentle.**
2. Understand that your **approach** may dictate how the seeker responds / receives the anointing.
3. Give the person some instruction about what you are going to do - help them to understand how to draw on God's power through you.
4. When possible, place your hand near the location of the hurt or suffering (in the case of physical illness), or on the shoulders. For more intimate problems, such as breast or reproductive system illnesses, usually women should lay hands on women and men on men. Or a spouse may lay hands on a spouse. Alternatively they can place their own hands over the hurt area and allow you to place your hand on top of theirs. **Appropriateness and respect is very important.**
5. When a small group prays, **only one** need to lay hands on the seeker. Two or at the most three should be a maximum number engaged in prayer ministry. More than this can be distracting.
6. Feelings of heat, tingling or coldness in the hands are usually an indication of the presence of healing power, though not an assurance of healing. Train yourself to sense the "flow" of the Anointing through you as these feelings will come and go.
7. Always remember this principle: It is important to **treat people with respect** so that they may maintain their dignity. **We want people to feel the love of God** through our activities and to go away feeling as though they have experienced His kindness and Mercy - even if there is no positive experience of immediate healing (which may begin to appear in the next hours, days or weeks).