

Laying on of Hands

“Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money” (Acts 8:17-20).

(Much of the material in this lesson has been prepared by Rev. Gerald McLean, a Guest Lecturer at PBS Ghana.)

“Laying on of hands” is mentioned as a foundational doctrine in Hebrews 6:2 and is also referred to as a “gift from God” in Acts 8:17-20.

“Laying on of hands” is defined as, “the act whereby one person places his hands on the body of another person with some definite spiritual purpose. Usually it is accompanied by prayer or prophetic utterance.”

The hands of a man, separate from the power of the Holy Ghost, are only instruments for eating, washing, working, and writing. However, in given situations the Spirit is manifested through the “laying on of hands.” The power of the Holy Ghost is seemingly transferred through his hands.

When Simon saw that the Samaritans received the Holy Ghost through the laying on of hands he wanted to have this power. However, this ministry is only effective if the one practicing it is born again, prayerful, and has faith that God is going to move in the situation. The power is

not in our hands but in the God we trust and have confidence in.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments we find the practice of laying on of hands. In laying of hands we find a graphic picture of transferring power and blessing from one person to another. This symbolic picture is still meaningful today. It has been shown medically that over one third of our five million touch receptors are centered in our hands. Our hands are so sensitive that blind people are being taught to read by using their fingertips.

Doctor D. Krieger, professor of nursing at New York University, has found numerous studies on the effects of laying on of hands. This doctor found that hemoglobin levels in the person’s bloodstream go up during the act of laying on of hands. As these levels are going up, body tissues receive more oxygen. This increase of oxygen assists the person in the regenerating process if he or she is ill.

In the Spiritual realm, laying on of hands is vital. It may indicate the transferring of a blessing or a curse; is used for ordination and impartation of various gifts from God (as in the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the Gifts of the Spirit).

In the Bible, laying on of hands was used for the impartation of blessing, authority, and healing. A person blessing another person would lay hands on them (Genesis 48:14; Matthew 19:15; Numbers 27:18-20, 22-23; Deuteronomy 34:9; 2 Kings 13:15-17).

The blessing of the baptism of the Holy Spirit also came through laying on of hands as we Acts 8:17; Acts 9:10-17; and Acts 19:1-7. Every believer can be used in this type of ministry as indicated in Mark 16:17-18.

Doctrine

Over one half of the recorded infillings of the Holy Spirit were associated with the laying on of hands.

Gifts of the Spirit can be imparted by the laying of hands (Romans 1:11-12; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).

It is also associated with healing in Mark 5:23; Luke 4:40; Acts 9:12; and James 5:14-15.

Ministers of the Gospel (including Deacons) were commissioned and/or ordained through laying on of hands (Acts 6:1-6; Acts 13:1-4). In the Old Testament the priests and Levites were ordained by laying on of hands. Joshua, Moses' successor was also confirmed this way (Numbers 27:23). This public and open acknowledgment affirms before the church that someone is called into leadership.

According to 1 Timothy 5:22, we are encouraged to see four caution lights (proceed with carefulness):

- We need to be careful not to lay hands on people suddenly. We do not move about laying hands on everyone we meet.
- Laying on of hands is associated with faith, prayer, and fasting.
- We should not be a partaker in another man's sins.
- We should keep ourselves pure and seek the guidance of God in using this ministry. We must remain humble.

Study Questions

1. Laying on of hands is a foundational doctrine. Where do we find proof of this? _____

2. What is meant by laying on of hands? _____

3. What happens medically when hands are laid on people? _____

4. What does laying on of hands indicate in the Spiritual realm? _____

5. Provide Scriptures that show the baptism of the Holy Ghost is associated with laying on of hands. _____

6. Provide Scriptural proof that the Gifts of the Spirit can be imparted by laying on of hands. _____

7. Give some Old Testament references of people being blessed by the laying on of hands. _____

8. Give Scriptures that show healing is associated with laying on of hands. _____

9. Who was, and is, commissioned and/or ordained by the laying on of hands? _____

10. What are some caution lights to be observed with the laying on of hands? _____
