

## **Chapter 4**

### ***FOUNDATION 4*** ***LAYING ON OF HANDS***

The fourth foundational truth or foundation stone listed in Hebrews 6:1-3 is the Laying on of Hands. Many Christian believers have little knowledge and less understanding of the use and practice of Laying on of Hands. For many it is a ritual practice in the ordination of church ministers and for some it is seen as part of prayers for healing. In this lesson we will look at some of the reasons the Laying on of Hands is considered foundational to our faith.

- I. There are several reasons it is important that we study the ministry of the laying on of hands. We will list three of them here and then go on to explore further the practice and application of this truth.
  - A. First, the laying on of hands is important because it is one of the foundation principles of the doctrine of Christ. Those things which the Bible identifies as foundational must be taken seriously in their own right. (Hebrews 6:2)
  - B. Second, the laying on of hands has been practiced by God's covenant people throughout both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament we find that fathers laid their hands on their children to impart blessing, priests laid their hands on a sacrifice to impute (impart) the sins of the people, hands were laid on priests to ordain them for service to God and His people, and prophets laid hands on kings in the process of anointing them to rule. In the New Testament we find that both healing and the impartation of spiritual gifts took place through the laying on of hands. (Genesis 48:14; Leviticus 8:18; Acts 9:17; 1 Timothy 4:14)
  - C. The third reason we find for the importance of the laying on of hands is that it shows us the absolute importance of community in our Christian faith. The Christian life is not designed to be lived alone. When we are born again we are born into the family of God. We become citizens of the Kingdom of God. This is community. The Christian life is not "Just Jesus and Me!" The fact that the laying on of hands figures into both the initial and on-going experiences of life shows us that our faith begins and continues in fellowship with other believers.
- II. There are two underlying principles that seem to be consistent in all the ways we practice the ministry of laying on of hands.
  - A. **Hands are for blessing.** In both Old and New Testaments we find that the laying on of hands, often accompanied by prayer and prophecy was practiced for the impartation of blessing.
    - 1. Jacob blessed his sons and the sons of Joseph. (Genesis 48:14)

2. Moses imparted some of the Spirit of God that was upon him to Joshua and to the elders. (Numbers 27:18)
3. Jesus laid His hands on the children and blessed them. (Matthew 19:13; Mark 10:16)

B. **Hands are for giving (impartation).** Jesus set an example and commanded and trained His disciples to use their hands to give and impart what they had received from God by His grace.

1. Jesus laid hands on sick people and imparted life and health.
2. Jesus took bread and fish in His hands and after blessing it, He gave it to His disciples to feed the hungry crowds.
3. Jesus told a rich man who desired to enter the Kingdom of God to, *"..Sell what you have and give to the poor, then come and follow Me."*
4. The Holy Spirit was given (imparted) through the laying on of the Apostle's hands. (Acts 8:17-18)

III. There are five scriptural ways that the ministry of the laying on of hands is to be practiced in the church. Each of them involves the laying on of hands to bless, to impart, to give.

A. **Blessing of children.** Jesus took children in His arms and put His hands on them and blessed them. This, together with the Old Testament practice of dedicating the firstborn to God, has become the New Testament practice of the blessing or dedication of children. The scripture does not give any basis for seeing this as the point at which a child is "saved" or "born again." The dedication or blessing of children is an act of faith in which the parents and the church bless the child with God's protection, provision, and care, and dedicate the child to God. They are also dedicating themselves to the nurturing of the child so that the child will have every possible opportunity in life, both naturally and spiritually. (Mark 10:16)

B. **Healing.** We have the example of Jesus, His disciples, and the church. A great deal of Jesus' time and effort in His ministry was used in the healing of the sick. Jesus most often healed through the laying on of His hands while speaking words of faith to the sick. He trained His disciples to lay hands on the sick and heal them and the accounts in the Book of Acts and Paul's letters show that this practice continued in the life of the church. (Mark 8:25; Mark 16:18; Luke 4:40; Acts 28:8)

C. **Imparting the Holy Spirit.** There are several scriptural examples of the Holy Spirit being imparted to Christian believers through the laying on of hands of the Apostles or of other mature Christians. This relates to the third level of ministry of the Holy Spirit discussed in Foundation lesson three, where the Holy Spirit comes UPON the believer to empower for service. This is being filled or baptized in the Holy Spirit. In the cases of believers who have little knowledge of the Holy Spirit or who have been wrongly taught that the Holy Spirit and His gifts are not for believers today, the laying on of hands to impart the Holy Spirit can be especially helpful. (Acts 8:17; Acts 9:17; Acts 19:6)

- D. **Impartation of spiritual gifts - accompanied by prophecy.** There are two important references to this ministry of the laying on of hands in Paul's letters to Timothy. Paul had received an impartation of the Holy Spirit for service through the laying on of Ananias' hands. He had later received a missionary commission through the laying on of hands with prophecy by the leaders of the Antioch church. Now he was participating in the impartation of ministry gifts to Timothy through the laying on of hands by himself and the other church leaders. (Acts 9:17; Acts 13:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6)
- E. **Ordination - Impartation of authority for leadership, confirmation of call and ministry.** From the earliest days of the development of church life, the laying on of hands has been the point of recognition for those who are to be placed in leadership and the means of imparting leadership anointing and authority. (Acts 6:6; Acts 13:3; 1 Timothy 5:22)

*NOTE: The Bible cautions us not to be hasty in the laying on of hands to commission a person for leadership service in the church. The person should be mature, proven, and should have served faithfully without formal recognition for a suitable time so that all are confident of the person's readiness for leadership. When a person is ordained through the laying on of hands, the church and its leaders are giving recognition, honor, and approval to the individual. Therefore they also identify with, and accept the responsibility to support, encourage, and discipline the one being ordained. (Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:10; 5:22)*

### **QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION**

Chapter 4      Foundation 4 - Laying on of Hands

1. Think about the teaching in the lesson on Laying on of Hands. How do you think we can use the Laying on of Hands in our everyday Christian life?
2. How would you explain the statement; "Hands are for giving and hands are for blessing?"