

Laying On Of Hands

'Israel (Jacob) stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly for Manasseh was the firstborn. Jacob blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads, and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac. Let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him. He held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father; for this is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head."

Jacob refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also will become a people, and he also will be great. However, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his seed will become a multitude of nations."

Jacob blessed them that day saying, "In you will Israel bless. God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh." He set Ephraim before Manasseh' (Genesis 48:14 to 20). Jacob laid his hands on the heads of his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh, and prophesied over them. Jacob's hands were divinely guided by the Lord, giving the younger son Ephraim a greater blessing than the elder son, Manasseh. We note the greater blessing was transmitted from the right hand and the lesser blessing from the left hand.

'The Lord God spoke to Moses saying, "Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them ... You shall present the Levites before the Lord. The children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites ... Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine" (Numbers 8:5 to 14). The whole congregation laid their hands on the priests who were set aside for their special ministry to the Lord.

'The Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Holy Spirit and lay your hand on him and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. You shall put your honour on him so that all the congregation of the children of Israel may obey. He shall stand before Eleazar the priest who will inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the Lord. At his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation."

Moses did as God commanded him. He took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before the entire congregation, and he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, as The Lord spoke by Moses' (Numbers 27:18 to 23). Moses laid his hands on Joshua and commissioned him to take over the leadership role because Moses was about to die and God ordained Joshua to lead the children of Israel. The act of laying on of hands had great significance for both Moses and Joshua, and for the whole of Israel. This God-ordained act had two purposes; Moses imparted to Joshua Spiritual wisdom and honour, and Joshua was acknowledged by the whole congregation as Moses' successor. We can read the outcome of this commission. 'Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab ... Joshua the son of Nun was full of the Spirit of wisdom for Moses had laid his hands on him, and the children of Israel listened to him and did as the Lord commanded' (Deuteronomy 34:5 & 9).

'Little children were brought to Jesus so that He may lay his hands on them and pray but the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, "Allow the little children and do not forbid them to come to Me; for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to ones like these." He laid his hands on them and departed from there' (Matthew 19:13 to 15). The laying on of hands was well known to the Jews when Jesus began to lay His hands on people, and we note that the first time it is recorded in the Gospels that Jesus laid His hands on anyone, was on small children. To lay ones hands on another in this context is to produce a spiritual outcome. It is a way the Lord imparts His will and blessing from one person to another. In the New Testament, the laying on of hands began with Jesus and continued with the apostles and was usually, but not always, done accompanied with prayer, prophecy or both. The act of laying on of hands is not to be done lightly or taken lightly. It is a serious spiritual act, played out with the body but should always be done with reverence, complete holiness and purity of mind. 'Lay hands hastily on no one ... Keep yourself pure' (1 Timothy 5:22). Laying on of hands is something that has been ordained by God for a specific spiritual purpose and was one of the foundation doctrines taught by the apostles (Hebrew 6:1 & 2).

There are nine scriptural purposes for laying on of hands; (1) to impart spiritual blessing (Genesis 48:14 to 20; Matthew 19:13 to 15) ... (2) to transfer the Lord's authority (Numbers 27:18 to 23) ... (3) to be given a special divine task (Numbers 8:14; Acts 6:1 to 7; 9:12 & 15) ... (4) to impart healing (Mark 16:18; Acts 28:8) ... (5) to receive baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17; 19:6) ... (6) to impart Spiritual gifts (1 Timothy 4:14) ...

(7) to send out missionaries (Acts 13:3) ... (8) to appoint church leaders (Acts 14:23) ... (9) or to speak an individual prophecy or a word of knowledge (1 Timothy 4:14).

For the laying on of hands to accomplish that which God desires, both the person laying on their hands, and the person receiving the act, must have faith in God, and faith to believe in the outcome or it will be ineffective. Laying on of hands is one of the many aspects of the whole Gospel message. Jesus said, "These signs will follow those who believe. In My name ... they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover" (Mark 16:17 & 18). Notice: they have to invoke the name of Jesus and they must believe.

Laying on of hands can accompany anointing with oil. It can also bring forgiveness. 'Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the assembly and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord Jesus, and the prayer of faith will heal him who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed sins, he will be forgiven' (James 5:14 & 15). The oil the Jews used was purified olive oil. They never used anything else. This verse was about believers in Jesus ministering to other believers within the assembly or church. All believers should be ready and willing to lay hands on the sick and pray for healing, according to the Scriptures, but the church leaders have a higher responsibility to do so. This particular verse does not refer to non-believers, however, they should not be ignored.

When we preach, teach or share the Gospel with the unsaved, the laying on of hands should impart the supernatural signs and miracles that Jesus said would accompany the Gospel of the Kingdom. The signs are intended to bear testimony and confirmation to the truth and authority of the Gospel, especially to people who have not previously heard. Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole earth. They who believe and are baptised will be saved; but they who do not believe will be condemned." ... Then Jesus said, "These signs will follow (or accompany) those who believe: in My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues (languages); they will take up (accidentally bitten but unhurt by) serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it will in no way hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover." So then the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. They went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the Word of God by the signs (miracles) that followed. Amen' (Mark 16:15 to 20).

When we lay hands on the sick, sometimes the sick person is instantly healed and that is a miracle. Sometimes the illness goes away slowly and the person realises a few days later the illness or pain has gone. Sometimes the person needs prayer several times before they are healed. Whatever method God chooses, we must be in submission to the sovereignty of God. Jesus said they would recover, but He did not specify how long that would take. The promise of healing is ours, but the method He chooses is His. The process of healing does not always occur the same way each time. Sometimes people may feel a strange heat coming from the hands. Sometimes people can sense the power of God. Some people fall flat onto their backs during a time of healing. Other times there is no outward sign but we must by faith, lay hands on people, pray and wait for God. Paul the apostle was instantly healed and he was filled with the Holy Spirit at the same time. 'Ananias laid his hands on Paul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me so that you may receive your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17).

Once we receive Spiritual gifts imparted to us by the laying on of hands, we are instructed to keep using them. 'Do not neglect the gift that is in you which was given to you by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the elders' (1 Timothy 4:14). 'I remind you that you should stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands' (2 Timothy 1:6).

Jesus not only laid His hands on the heads of children, He hugged each one of them. 'Jesus took the children in his arms and blessed them, laying His hands on them' (Mark 10:16). Those children were truly blessed, being hugged by our Creator.

Amen and God bless you.

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